This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

THE

ALPHEUS FELCH HISTORICAL LIBRARY

BEQUEATHED

TO THE

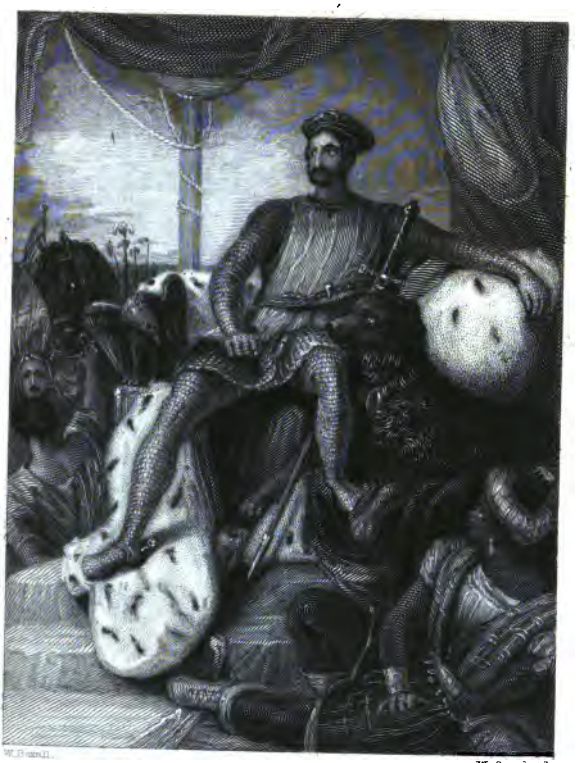
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

BY THE

HON. ALPHEUS FELCH.

1896.

828
S43
1829
V.46



W. Greatbatch.

COUNT ROBERT OF PARIS.

Without a moment's hesitation the Frank seated himself in the vacant throne of the Emperor, and extending his half armed and robust figure on the golden cushions which were destined for Alexius, he indolently began to caress a large wolf hound.

[illegible] PUBLISHED 1833, BY ROBERT CADELL, and WHITTAKER & C[illegible]

Scott, Walter

WAVERLEY NOVELS.

VOL. XLVI. 69438

COUNT ROBERT OF PARIS.

The assassin hovered less than an instant over the sleeper, as if to mark the interval between the ill fitted corslet, and the body which it was designed to protect.

PRINTED FOR ROBERT CADELL, EDINBURGH,
AND WHITTAKER & Cº LONDON.
1833.

TALES OF MY LANDLORD.

Fourth and Last Series,

COLLECTED AND ARRANGED

BY

JEDEDIAH CLEISHBOTHAM,

SCHOOLMASTER AND PARISH-CLERK OF GANDERCLEUCH.

The European with the Asian shore—
Sophia's cupola with golden gleam—
The cypress groves—Olympus high and hoar—
The twelve isles, and the more than I could dream,
Far less describe, present the very view
That charm'd the charming Mary Montagu.
Don Juan.

PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE AND COMPANY, PAUL'S WORK, EDINBURGH.

ADVERTISEMENT.

[Sir Walter Scott transmitted from Naples, in February 1832, an Introduction for Castle Dangerous; but if he ever wrote one for a Second Edition of Robert of Paris, it has not been discovered among his papers.

Some notes, chiefly extracts from the books which he had been observed to consult while *dictating* this novel, are now appended to its pages; and in addition to what the author had given in the shape of historical information respecting the principal real persons introduced, the reader is here presented with what may probably amuse him, the passage of the Alexiad, in which Anna Comnena describes the incident which originally, no doubt, determined Sir Walter's choice of a hero.

May, A.D. 1097.—"As for the multitude of those who advanced towards THE GREAT CITY, let it be enough to say that they were as the stars in the heaven, or as the sand upon the seashore. They were, in the words of Homer, *as many as the leaves and flowers of spring.* But for the names of the leaders, though they are present in my memory, I will not relate them. The numbers of these would alone deter me, even if my language furnished the means of expressing their barbarous sounds; and for what purpose should I afflict my readers with a long enumeration of the names of those, whose visible presence gave so much horror to all that beheld them?

"As soon, therefore, as they approached the Great City, they occupied the station appointed for them by the Emperor, near to the monastery of Cosmidius. But this multitude were not, like the Hellenic one of old, to be restrained and governed by the loud voices of nine heralds; they required the constant superintendence of chosen and valiant soldiers, to keep them from violating the commands of the Emperor.

"He, meantime, laboured to obtain from

the other leaders that acknowledgment of his supreme authority, which had already been drawn from Godfrey [Γοντοφρε] himself. But notwithstanding the willingness of some to accede to this proposal, and their assistance in working on the minds of their associates, the Emperor's endeavours had little success, as the majority were looking for the arrival of Bohemund [Βαιμοντος], in whom they placed their chief confidence, and resorted to every art with the view of gaining time. The Emperor, whom it was not easy to deceive, penetrated their motives; and by granting to one powerful person demands which had been supposed out of all bounds of expectation, and by resorting to a variety of other devices, he at length prevailed, and won general assent to the following of the example of Godfrey, who also was sent for in person to assist in this business.

"All, therefore, being assembled, and Godfrey among them, the oath was taken; but when all was finished, a certain Noble among these Counts had the audacity to seat himself on the throne of the Emperor. [Τολμησας τις απο παντων των κομητων ενγενης εις τον σκιμποδα τυ Βασιλεως εκαθισεν.] The Emperor restrained himself

and said nothing, for he was well acquainted of old with the nature of the Latins.

"But the Count Baldwin [Βαλδουινος] stepping forth, and seizing him by the hand, dragged him thence, and with many reproaches said, 'It becomes thee not to do such things here, especially after having taken the oath of fealty [δουλειαν ὑποσχομενῳ]. It is not the custom of the Roman Emperors to permit any of their inferiors to sit beside them, not even of such as are born subjects of their empire; and it is necessary to respect the customs of the country.' But he, answering nothing to Baldwin, stared yet more fixedly upon the Emperor, and muttered to himself something in his own dialect, which, being interpreted, was to this effect—'Behold, what rustic fellow [χωριτης] is this, to be seated alone while such leaders stand around him!' The movement of his lips did not escape the Emperor, who called to him one that understood the Latin dialect, and enquired what words the man had spoken. When he heard them, the Emperor said nothing to the other Latins, but kept the thing to himself. When, however, the business was all over, he called near to him by

himself that swelling and shameless Latin [ὑψηλοφρονα ἐκεινον και ἀναιδῆ], and asked of him, who he was, of what lineage, and from what region he had come. 'I am a Frank,' said he, 'of pure blood, of the Nobles. One thing I know, that where three roads meet in the place from which I came, there is an ancient church, in which whosoever has the desire to measure himself against another in single combat, prays God to help him therein, and afterwards abides the coming of one willing to encounter him. At that spot long time did I remain, but the man bold enough to stand against me I found not.' Hearing these words the Emperor said, 'If hitherto thou hast sought battles in vain, the time is at hand which will furnish thee with abundance of them. And I advise thee to place thyself neither before the phalanx, nor in its rear, but to stand fast in the midst of thy fellow-soldiers; for of old time I am well acquainted with the warfare of the Turks.' With such advice he dismissed not only this man, but the rest of those who were about to depart on that expedition."—*Alexiad*, Book x. pp. 237, 238.

Ducange, as is mentioned in the novel, iden-

tifies the church, thus described by the crusader, with that of *Our Lady of Soissons*, of which a French poet of the days of Louis VII. says—

> Veiller y vont encore li Pelerin
> Cil qui bataille veulent fere et fournir.
> DUCANGE *in Alexiad*, p. 86.

The Princess Anna Comnena, it may be proper to observe, was born on the first of December, A.D. 1083, and was consequently in her fifteenth year when the chiefs of the first crusade made their appearance in her father's court. Even then, however, it is not improbable that she might have been the wife of Nicephorus Bryennius, whom, many years after his death, she speaks of in her history as τον εμε καισαρα, and in other terms equally affectionate. The bitterness with which she uniformly mentions Bohemund, Count of Tarentum, afterwards Prince of Antioch, has, however, been ascribed to a disappointment in love; and on one remarkable occasion, the Princess certainly expressed great contempt of her husband. I am aware of no other authorities for the liberties taken with this lady's conjugal character in the novel.

Her husband, Nicephorus Bryennius, was the grandson of the person of that name, who figures in history as the rival, in a contest for the imperial throne, of Nicephorus Botoniates. He was, on his marriage with Anna Comnena, invested with the rank of *Panhypersebastos*, or *Omnium Augustissimus;* but Alexius deeply offended him, by afterwards recognising the superior and simpler dignity of a *Sebastos.* His eminent qualities, both in peace and war, are acknowledged by Gibbon: and he has left us four books of Memoirs, detailing the early part of his father-in-law's history, and valuable as being the work of an eyewitness of the most important events which he describes. Anna Comnena appears to have considered it her duty to take up the task which her husband had not lived to complete; and hence the Alexiad—certainly, with all its defects, the first historical work that has as yet proceeded from a female pen.

"The life of the Emperor Alexius," (says Gibbon,) "has been delineated by the pen of a favourite daughter, who was inspired by tender regard for his person, and a laudable zeal to perpetuate his virtues. Conscious of

the just suspicion of her readers, the Princess repeatedly protests, that, besides her personal knowledge, she had searched the discourse and writings of the most respectable veterans; and that after an interval of thirty years, forgotten by, and forgetful of the world, her mournful solitude was inaccessible to hope and fear: that truth, the naked perfect truth, was more dear than the memory of her parent. Yet instead of the simplicity of style and narrative which wins our belief, an elaborate affectation of rhetoric and science betrays in every page the vanity of a female author. The genuine character of Alexius is lost in a vague constellation of virtues; and the perpetual strain of panegyric and apology awakens our jealousy, to question the veracity of the historian, and the merit of her hero. We cannot, however, refuse her judicious and important remark, that the disorders of the times were the misfortune and the glory of Alexius; and that every calamity which can afflict a declining empire was accumulated on his reign by the justice of Heaven and the vices of his predecessors. In the east, the victorious Turks had spread, from Persia to the Hellespont, the

reign of the Koran and the Crescent; the west was invaded by the adventurous valour of the Normans; and, in the moments of peace, the Danube poured forth new swarms, who had gained in the science of war what they had lost in the ferociousness of their manners. The sea was not less hostile than the land; and, while the frontiers were assaulted by an open enemy, the palace was distracted with secret conspiracy and treason.

"On a sudden, the banner of the Cross was displayed by the Latins; Europe was precipitated on Asia; and Constantinople had almost been swept away by this impetuous deluge. In the tempest Alexius steered the Imperial vessel with dexterity and courage. At the head of his armies, he was bold in action, skilful in stratagem, patient of fatigue, ready to improve his advantages, and rising from his defeats with inexhaustible vigour. The discipline of the camp was reversed, and a new generation of men and soldiers was created by the precepts and example of their leader. In his intercourse with the Latins, Alexius was patient and artful; his discerning eye pervaded the new system of an unknown world.

" The increase of the male and female branches of his family adorned the throne, and secured the succession; but their princely luxury and pride offended the patricians, exhausted the revenue, and insulted the misery of the people. Anna is a faithful witness that his happiness was destroyed and his health broken by the cares of a public life; the patience of Constantinople was fatigued by the length and severity of his reign; and before Alexius expired, he had lost the love and reverence of his subjects. The clergy could not forgive his application of the sacred riches to the defence of the state; but they applauded his theological learning, and ardent zeal for the orthodox faith, which he defended with his tongue, his pen, and his sword. Even the sincerity of his moral and religious virtues was suspected by the persons who had passed their lives in his confidence. In his last hours, when he was pressed by his wife Irene to alter the succession, he raised his head, and breathed a pious ejaculation on the vanity of the world. The indignant reply of the Empress may be inscribed as an epitaph on his tomb,—'You die, as you have lived—a hypocrite.'

"It was the wish of Irene to supplant the eldest of her sons in favour of her daughter, the Princess Anna, whose philosophy would not have refused the weight of a diadem. But the order of male succession was asserted by the friends of their country; the lawful heir drew the royal signet from the finger of his insensible or conscious father, and the empire obeyed the master of the palace. Anna Comnena was stimulated by ambition and revenge to conspire against the life of her brother; and when the design was prevented by the fears or scruples of her husband, she passionately exclaimed that nature had mistaken the two sexes, and had endowed Bryennius with the soul of a woman. After the discovery of her treason, the life and fortune of Anna were justly forfeited to the laws. Her life was spared by the clemency of the emperor, but he visited the pomp and treasures of her palace, and bestowed the rich confiscation on the most deserving of his friends."—*History of the Decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. xlviii.

The year of Anna's death is nowhere recorded. She appears to have written the *Alexiad* in a convent; and to have spent

nearly thirty years in this retirement, before her book was published.

For accurate particulars of the public events touched on in *Robert of Paris*, the reader is referred to the above quoted author, chapters xlviii. xlix. and l.; and to the first volume of Mills' History of the Crusades.

J. G. L.]

London, 1*st March*, 1833.

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

JEDEDIAH CLEISHBOTHAM, M.A.

To the loving Reader wisheth health and prosperity.

It would ill become me, whose name has been spread abroad by those former collections, bearing this title of "Tales of my Landlord," and who have, by the candid voice of a numerous crowd of readers, been taught to think that I merit not the empty fame alone, but also the more substantial rewards, of successful pencraft—it would, I say, ill become me to suffer this, my youngest literary babe, and, probably at the same time, the last child of mine old age, to pass into the world without some such modest apology for its defects, as it has been my custom to put forth on preceding occasions of the like nature. The world has

been sufficiently instructed, of a truth, that I am not individually the person to whom is to be ascribed the actual inventing or designing of the scheme upon which these Tales, which men have found so pleasing, were originally constructed; as also that neither am I the actual workman, who, furnished by a skilful architect with an accurate plan, including elevations and directions both general and particular, has from thence toiled to bring forth and complete the intended shape and proportion of each division of the edifice. Nevertheless I have been indisputably the man, who, in placing my name at the head of the undertaking, have rendered myself mainly and principally responsible for its general success. When a ship of war goeth forth to battle with her crew, consisting of sundry foremast-men and various officers, such subordinate persons are not said to gain or lose the vessel which they have manned or attacked, (although each was natheless sufficiently active in his own department;) but it is forthwith bruited and noised abroad, without further phrase, that Captain Jedediah Cleishbotham hath lost such a seventy-four, or won that which, by the

united exertions of all thereto pertaining, is taken from the enemy. In the same manner, shame and sorrow it were, if I, the voluntary Captain and founder of these adventures, after having upon three divers occasions assumed to myself the emoluments and reputation thereof, should now withdraw myself from the risks of failure proper to this fourth and last outgoing. No! I will rather address my associates in this bottom with the constant spirit of Matthew Prior's heroine:

> "Did I but purpose to embark with thee
> On the smooth surface of some summer sea,
> But would forsake the waves, and make the shore,
> When the winds whistle, and the billows roar?"

As little, nevertheless, would it become my years and station not to admit without cavil certain errors which may justly be pointed out in these concluding "Tales of my Landlord," —the last, and, it is manifest, never carefully revised or corrected handiwork, of Mr Peter Pattison, now no more; the same worthy young man so repeatedly mentioned in these Introductory Essays, and never without that tribute to his good sense and talents, nay, even genius, which his contributions to this my undertaking fairly entitled him to claim at the

hands of his surviving friend and patron. These pages, I have said, were the *ultimus labor* of mine ingenious assistant; but I say not, as the great Dr Pitcairn of his hero,—*ultimus atque optimus.* Alas! even the giddiness attendant on a journey on this Manchester rail-road is not so perilous to the nerves, as that too frequent exercise in the merry-go-round of the ideal world, whereof the tendency to render the fancy confused, and the judgment inert, hath in all ages been noted, not only by the erudite of the earth, but even by many of the thick-witted Ofelli themselves; whether the rapid pace at which the fancy moveth in such exercitations, where the wish of the penman is to him like Prince Houssain's tapestry, in the Eastern fable, be the chief source of peril—or whether, without reference to this wearing speed of movement, the dwelling habitually in those realms of imagination, be as little suited for a man's intellect, as to breathe for any considerable space "the difficult air of the mountain top" is to the physical structure of his outward frame—this question belongeth not to me; but certain it is, that we often discover in the

works of the foremost of this order of men, marks of bewilderment and confusion, such as do not so frequently occur in those of persons to whom nature hath conceded fancy weaker of wing, or less ambitious in flight.

It is affecting to see the great Miguel Cervantes himself, even like the sons of meaner men, defending himself against the critics of the day, who assailed him upon such little discrepancies and inaccuracies as are apt to cloud the progress even of a mind like his, when the evening is closing around it. "It is quite a common thing," says Don Quixote, "for men who have gained a very great reputation by their writings before they were printed, quite to lose it afterwards, or, at least, the greater part." "The reason is plain," answers the Bachelor Carrasco; "their faults are more easily discovered after the books are printed, as being then more read, and more narrowly examined, especially if the author has been much cried up before, for then the severity of the scrutiny is sure to be the greater. Those who have raised themselves a name by their own ingenuity, great poets and celebrated historians, are commonly, if not

always, envied by a set of men who delight in censuring the writings of others, though they could never produce any of their own."—"That is no wonder," quoth Don Quixote; "there are many divines that would make but very dull preachers, and yet are quick enough at finding faults and superfluities in other men's sermons."—"All this is true," says Carrasco, "and therefore I could wish such censurers would be more merciful and less scrupulous, and not dwell ungenerously upon small spots that are in a manner but so many atoms on the face of the clear sun they murmur at. If *aliquando dormitat Homerus*, let them consider how many nights he kept himself awake to bring his noble works to light as little darkened with defects as might be. But, indeed, it may many times happen, that what is censured for a fault, is rather an ornament, as moles often add to the beauty of a face. When all is said, he that publishes a book, runs a great risk, since nothing can be so unlikely as that he should have composed one capable of securing the approbation of every reader." "Sure," says Don Quixote, "that which treats of me can have pleased but few?"

"Quite the contrary," says Carrasco; "for as *infinitus est numerus stultorum*, so an infinite number have admired your history. Only some there are who have taxed the author with want of memory or sincerity, because he forgot to give an account who it was that stole Sancho's Dapple, for that particular is not mentioned there, only we find, by the story, that it was stolen; and yet, by and by, we find him riding the same ass again, without any previous light given us into the matter. Then they say that the author forgot to tell the reader what Sancho did with the hundred pieces of gold he found in the portmanteau in the Sierra Morena, for there is not a word said of them more; and many people have a great mind to know what he did with them, and how he spent them; which is one of the most material points in which the work is defective."

How amusingly Sancho is made to clear up the obscurities thus alluded to by the Bachelor Carrasco—no reader can have forgotten; but there remained enough of similar *lacunæ*, inadvertencies, and mistakes, to exercise the ingenuity of those Spanish critics, who were too wise in their own conceit to profit by the good-

natured and modest apology of this immortal author.

There can be no doubt, that if Cervantes had deigned to use it, he might have pleaded also the apology of indifferent health, under which he certainly laboured while finishing the second part of "Don Quixote." It must be too obvious that the intervals of such a malady as then affected Cervantes, could not be the most favourable in the world for revising lighter compositions, and correcting, at least, those grosser errors and imperfections which each author should, if it were but for shame's sake, remove from his work, before bringing it forth into the broad light of day, where they will never fail to be distinctly seen, nor lack ingenious persons, who will be too happy in discharging the office of pointing them out.

It is more than time to explain with what purpose we have called thus fully to memory the many venial errors of the inimitable Cervantes, and those passages in which he has rather defied his adversaries than pleaded his own justification; for I suppose it will be readily granted, that the difference is too wide

betwixt that great wit of Spain and ourselves, to permit us to use a buckler which was rendered sufficiently formidable only by the strenuous hand in which it was placed.

The history of my first publications is sufficiently well known. Nor did I relinquish the purpose of concluding these "Tales of my Landlord," which had been so remarkably fortunate; but Death, which steals upon us all with an inaudible foot, cut short the ingenious young man to whose memory I composed that inscription, and erected, at my own charge, that monument which protects his remains, by the side of the river Gander, which he has contributed so much to render immortal, and in a place of his own selection, not very distant from the school under my care.* In a word, the ingenious Mr Pattison was removed from his place.

Nor did I confine my care to his posthumous fame alone, but carefully inventoried and preserved the effects which he left behind him, namely, the contents of his small wardrobe,

* See volume IX. of the New Edition of the Waverley Novels, p. 241, for some circumstances attending this erection.

and a number of printed books of somewhat more consequence, together with certain woefully blurred manuscripts, discovered in his repository. On looking these over, I found them to contain two Tales called "Count Robert of Paris," and "Castle Dangerous;" but was seriously disappointed to perceive that they were by no means in that state of correctness, which would induce an experienced person to pronounce any writing, in the technical language of bookcraft, "prepared for press." There were not only *hiatus valde deflendi*, but even grievous inconsistencies, and other mistakes, which the penman's leisurely revision, had he been spared to bestow it, would doubtless have cleared away. After a considerate perusal, I no question flattered myself that these manuscripts, with all their faults, contained here and there passages, which seemed plainly to intimate that severe indisposition had been unable to extinguish altogether the brilliancy of that fancy which the world had been pleased to acknowledge in the creations of Old Mortality, the Bride of Lammermoor, and others of these narratives. But I, nevertheless, threw the manuscripts

into my drawer, resolving not to think of committing them to the Ballantynian ordeal, until I could either obtain the assistance of some capable person to supply deficiencies, and correct errors, so as they might face the public with credit, or perhaps numerous and more serious avocations might permit me to dedicate my own time and labour to that task.

While I was in this uncertainty, I had a visit from a stranger, who was announced as a young gentleman desirous of speaking with me on particular business. I immediately augured the accession of a new boarder, but was at once checked by observing that the outward man of the stranger was, in a most remarkable degree, what mine host of the Sir William Wallace, in his phraseology, calls *seedy*. His black coat had seen service; the waistcoat of grey plaid bore yet stronger marks of having encountered more than one campaign; his third piece of dress was an absolute veteran compared to the others; his shoes were so loaded with mud as showed his journey must have been pedestrian; and a grey *maud*, which fluttered around his wasted limbs, completed such an equipment as, since Juvenal's

days, has been the livery of the poor scholar. I therefore concluded that I beheld a candidate for the vacant office of usher, and prepared to listen to his proposals with the dignity becoming my station; but what was my surprise when I found I had before me, in this rusty student, no less a man than Paul, the brother of Peter Pattison, come to gather in his brother's succession, and possessed, it seemed, with no small idea of the value of that part of it which consisted in the productions of his pen!

By the rapid study I made of him, this Paul was a sharp lad, imbued with some tincture of letters, like his regretted brother, but totally destitute of those amiable qualities which had often induced me to say within myself, that Peter was, like the famous John Gay,—

"In wit a man, simplicity a child."

He set little by the legacy of my deceased assistant's wardrobe, nor did the books hold much greater value in his eyes: but he peremptorily demanded to be put in possession of the manuscripts, alleging, with obstinacy, that no definite bargain had been completed

between his late brother and me, and at length produced the opinion to that effect of a writer, or man of business,—a class of persons with whom I have always chosen to have as little concern as possible.

'But I had one defence left, which came to my aid, *tanquam deus ex machinâ*. This rapacious Paul Pattison could not pretend to wrest the disputed manuscripts out of my possession, unless upon repayment of a considerable sum of money, which I had advanced from time to time to the deceased Peter, and particularly to purchase a small annuity for his aged mother. These advances, with the charges of the funeral and other expenses, amounted to a considerable sum, which the poverty-struck student and his acute legal adviser equally foresaw great difficulty in liquidating. The said Mr Paul Pattison, therefore, listened to a suggestion, which I dropped as if by accident, that if he thought himself capable of filling his brother's place of carrying the work through the press, I would make him welcome to bed and board within my mansion while he was thus engaged, only requiring his occasional assistance at hearing the more advanced scholars.

This seemed to promise a close of our dispute, alike satisfactory to all parties, and the first act of Paul was to draw on me for a round sum, under pretence that his wardrobe must be wholly refitted. To this I made no objection, though it certainly showed like vanity to purchase garments in the extremity of the mode, when not only great part of the defunct's habiliments were very fit for a twelvemonth's use, but, as I myself had been, but yesterday as it were, equipped in a becoming new stand of black clothes, Mr Pattison would have been welcome to the use of such of my quondam raiment as he thought suitable, as indeed had always been the case with his deceased brother.

The school, I must needs say, came tolerably on. My youngster was very smart, and seemed to be so active in his duty of usher, if I may so speak, that he even overdid his part therein, and I began to feel myself a cipher in my own school.

I comforted myself with the belief that the publication was advancing as fast as I could desire. On this subject, Paul Pattison, like ancient Pistol, "talked bold words at the

bridge," and that not only at our house, but in the society of our neighbours, amongst whom, instead of imitating the retired and monastic manner of his brother deceased, he became a gay visitor, and such a reveller, that in process of time he was observed to vilipend the modest fare which had at first been esteemed a banquet by his hungry appetite, and thereby highly displeased my wife, who, with justice, applauds herself for the plentiful, cleanly, and healthy victuals, wherewith she maintains her ushers and boarders.

Upon the whole, I rather hoped than entertained a sincere confidence that all was going on well, and was in that unpleasant state of mind which precedes the open breach between two associates who have been long jealous of each other, but are as yet deterred by a sense of mutual interest from coming to an open rupture.

The first thing which alarmed me was a rumour in the village, that Paul Pattison intended, in some little space, to undertake a voyage to the Continent—on account of his health, as was pretended, but, as the same report averred, much more with the view of gratifying

the curiosity which his perusal of the classics had impressed upon him, than for any other purpose. I was, I say, rather alarmed at this *susurrus*, and began to reflect that the retirement of Mr Pattison, unless his loss could be supplied in good time, was like to be a blow to the establishment; for, in truth, this Paul had a winning way with the boys, especially those who were gentle-tempered; so that I must confess my doubts whether, in certain respects, I myself could have fully supplied his place in the school, with all my authority and experience. My wife, jealous, as became her station, of Mr Pattison's intentions, advised me to take the matter up immediately, and go to the bottom at once; and, indeed, I had always found that way answered best with my boys.

Mrs Cleishbotham was not long before renewing the subject; for, like most of the race of Xantippe, (though my helpmate is a well spoken woman,) she loves to thrust in her oar where she is not able to pull it to purpose. "You are a sharp-witted man, Mr Cleishbotham," would she observe, "and a learned man, Mr Cleishbotham—and the schoolmaster

of Gandercleuch, Mr Cleishbotham, which is saying all in one word; but many a man almost as great as yourself has lost the saddle by suffering an inferior to get up behind him; and though, with the world, Mr Cleishbotham, you have the name of doing every thing, both in directing the school and in this new profitable book line which you have taken up, yet it begins to be the common talk of Gandercleuch, both up the water and down the water, that the usher both writes the dominie's books, and teaches the dominie's school. Ay, ay, ask maid, wife, or widow, and she'll tell ye, the least gaitling among them all comes to Paul Pattison with his lesson as naturally as they come to me for their fourhours, puir things; and never ane thinks of applying to you aboot a kittle turn, or a crabbed word, or about ony thing else, unless it were for *licet exire*, or the mending of an auld pen."

Now, this address assailed me on a summer evening, when I was whiling away my leisure hours with the end of a cutty-pipe, and indulging in such bland imaginations as the Nicotian weed is wont to produce, more especially in the case of studious persons, devoted

musis severioribus. I was naturally loath to leave my misty sanctuary; and endeavoured to silence the clamour of Mrs Cleishbotham's tongue, which has something in it peculiarly shrill and penetrating. "Woman," said I, with a tone of domestic authority befitting the occasion, "*res tuas agas;*—mind your washings and your wringings, your stuffings and your physicking, or whatever concerns the outward person of the pupils, and leave the progress of their education to my usher, Paul Pattison, and myself."

"I am glad to see," added the accursed woman, (that I should say so!) "that ye have the grace to name him foremost, for there is little doubt that he ranks first of the troop, if ye wad but hear what the neighbours speak—or whisper."

"What do they whisper, thou sworn sister of the Eumenides?" cried I,—the irritating *œstrum* of the woman's objurgation totally counterbalancing the sedative effects both of pipe and pot.

"Whisper?" resumed she in her shrillest note—"why, they whisper loud enough for me at least to hear them, that the schoolmas-

ter of Gandercleuch is turned a doited auld woman, and spends all his time in tippling strong drink with the keeper of the public-house, and leaves school and bookmaking, and a' the rest o't, to the care of his usher; and, also, the wives in Gandercleuch say, that you have engaged Paul Pattison to write a new book, which is to beat a' the lave that gaed afore it; and, to show what a sair lift you have o' the job, you didna sae muckle as ken the name o't—no, nor whether it was to be about some Heathen Greek, or the Black Douglas."

This was said with such bitterness that it penetrated to the very quick, and I hurled the poor old pipe, like one of Homer's spears, not in the face of my provoking helpmate, though the temptation was strong, but into the river Gander, which, as is now well known to tourists from the uttermost parts of the earth, pursues its quiet meanders beneath the bank on which the schoolhouse is pleasantly situated; and, starting up, fixed on my head the cocked hat, (the pride of Messrs Grieve and Scott's repository,) and plunging into the valley of the brook, pursued my way upwards,

the voice of Mrs Cleishbotham accompanying me in my retreat with something like the angry scream of triumph with which the brood-goose pursues the flight of some unmannerly cur or idle boy who has intruded upon her premises, and fled before her. Indeed, so great was the influence of this clamour of scorn and wrath which hung upon my rear, that while it rung in my ears, I was so moved that I instinctively tucked the skirts of my black coat under my arm, as if I had been in actual danger of being seized on by the grasp of the pursuing enemy. Nor was it till I had almost reached the well-known burial-place, in which it was Peter Pattison's hap to meet the far-famed personage called Old Mortality, that I made a halt for the purpose of composing my perturbed spirits, and considering what was to be done; for as yet my mind was agitated by a chaos of passions, of which anger was predominant; and for what reason, or against whom, I entertained such tumultuous displeasure, it was not easy for me to determine.

Nevertheless, having settled my cocked hat with becoming accuracy on my well-powdered

wig, and suffered it to remain uplifted for a moment to cool my flushed brow—having, moreover, readjusted and shaken to rights the skirts of my black coat, I came into case to answer to my own questions, which, till these manœuvres had been sedately accomplished, I might have asked myself in vain.

In the first place, therefore, to use the phrase of Mr Docket, the writer (that is, the attorney) of our village of Gandercleuch, I became satisfied that my anger was directed against all and sundry, or, in law Latin, *contra omnes mortales*, and more particularly against the neighbourhood of Gandercleuch, for circulating reports to the prejudice of my literary talents, as well as my accomplishments as a pedagogue, and transferring the fame thereof to mine own usher. Secondly, against my spouse, Dorothea Cleishbotham, for transferring the said calumnious reports to my ears in a prerupt and unseemly manner, and without due respect either to the language which she made use of, or the person to whom she spoke, —treating affairs in which I was so intimately concerned as if they were proper subjects for jest among gossips at a christening, where the

womankind claim the privilege of worshipping the *Bona Dea* according to their secret female rites. Thirdly, I became clear that I was entitled to respond to any whom it concerned to enquire, that my wrath was kindled against Paul Pattison, my usher, for giving occasion both for the neighbours of Gandercleuch entertaining such opinions, and for Mrs Cleishbotham disrespectfully urging them to my face, since neither circumstance could have existed, without he had put forth sinful misrepresentations of transactions, private and confidential, and of which I had myself entirely refrained from dropping any the least hint to any third person.

This arrangement of my ideas having contributed to soothe the stormy atmosphere of which they had been the offspring, gave reason a time to predominate, and to ask me, with her calm but clear voice, whether, under all the circumstances, I did well to nourish so indiscriminate an indignation? In fine, on closer examination, the various splenetic thoughts I had been indulging against other parties, began to be merged in that resentment against my perfidious usher, which, like the

serpent of Moses, swallowed up all subordinate objects of displeasure. To put myself at open feud with the whole of my neighbours, unless I had been certain of some effectual mode of avenging myself upon them, would have been an undertaking too weighty for my means, and not unlikely, if rashly grappled withal, to end in my ruin. To make a public quarrel with my wife, on such an account as her opinion of my literary accomplishments, would sound ridiculous: and, besides, Mrs C. was sure to have all the women on her side, who would represent her as a wife persecuted by her husband for offering him good advice, and urging it upon him with only too enthusiastic sincerity.

There remained Paul Pattison, undoubtedly, the most natural and proper object of my indignation, since I might be said to have him in my own power, and might punish him by dismissal, at my pleasure. Yet even vindictive proceedings against the said Paul, however easy to be enforced, might be productive of serious consequences to my own purse; and I began to reflect, with anxiety, that in this world it is not often that the gratification of

our angry passions lies in the same road with the advancement of our interest, and that the wise man, the *vere sapiens*, seldom hesitates which of these two he ought to prefer.

I recollected also that I was quite uncertain how far the present usher had really been guilty of the foul acts of assumption charged against him.

In a word, I began to perceive that it would be no light matter, at once, and without maturer perpending of sundry collateral *puncti-uncula*, to break up a joint-stock adventure, or society, as civilians term it, which, if profitable to him, had at least promised to be no less so to me, established in years and learning and reputation so much his superior. Moved by which, and other the like considerations, I resolved to proceed with becoming caution on the occasion, and not, by stating my causes of complaint too hastily in the outset, exasperate into a positive breach what might only prove some small misunderstanding, easily explained or apologized for, and which, like a leak in a new vessel, being once discovered and carefully stopped, renders the vessel but more seaworthy than it was before.

About the time that I had adopted this healing resolution, I reached the spot where the almost perpendicular face of a steep hill seems to terminate the valley, or at least divides it into two dells, each serving as a cradle to its own mountain-stream, the Gruff-quack, namely, and the shallower but more noisy, Gusedub, on the left hand, which, at their union, form the Gander, properly so called. Each of these little valleys has a walk winding up to its recesses, rendered more easy by the labours of the poor during the late hard season, and one of which bears the name of Pattison's path, while the other had been kindly consecrated to my own memory, by the title of the Dominie's Daidling-bit. Here I made certain to meet my associate, Paul Pattison, for by one or other of these roads he was wont to return to my house of an evening, after his lengthened rambles.

Nor was it long before I espied him descending the Gusedub by that tortuous path, marking so strongly the character of a Scottish glen. He was easily distinguished, indeed, at some distance, by his jaunty swagger, in which he presented to you the flat of his leg, like

the manly knave of clubs, apparently with the most perfect contentment, not only with his leg and boot, but with every part of his outward man, and the whole fashion of his garments, and, one would almost have thought, the contents of his pockets.

In this, his wonted guise, he approached me, where I was seated near the meeting of the waters, and I could not but discern, that his first impulse was to pass me without any prolonged or formal greeting. But as that would not have been decent, considering the terms on which we stood, he seemed to adopt, on reflection, a course directly opposite; bustled up to me with an air of alacrity, and, I may add, impudence; and hastened at once into the middle of the important affairs which it had been my purpose to bring under discussion in a manner more becoming their gravity. "I am glad to see you, Mr Cleishbotham," said he, with an inimitable mixture of confusion and effrontery; "the most wonderful news which has been heard in the literary world in my time—all Gandercleuch rings with it—they positively speak of nothing else, from Miss Buskbody's youngest apprentice to

the minister himself, and ask each other in amazement, whether the tidings are true or false—to be sure they are of an astounding complexion, especially to you and me."

"Mr Pattison," said I, "I am quite at a loss to guess at your meaning. *Davus sum, non Œdipus*—I am Jedediah Cleishbotham, Schoolmaster of the parish of Gandercleuch; no conjurer, and neither reader of riddles, nor expounder of enigmata."

"Well," replied Paul Pattison, "Mr Jedediah Cleishbotham, Schoolmaster of the parish of Gandercleuch, and so forth, all I have to inform you is, that our hopeful scheme is entirely blown up. The tales, on publishing which we reckoned with so much confidence, have already been printed; they are abroad, over all America, and the British papers are clamorous."

I received this news with the same equanimity with which I should have accepted a blow addressed to my stomach by a modern gladiator, with the full energy of his fist. "If this be correct information, Mr Pattison," said I, "I must of necessity suspect you to be the person who have supplied the foreign press

with the copy which the printers have thus made an unscrupulous use of, without respect to the rights of the undeniable proprietors of the manuscripts; and I request to know whether this American production embraces the alterations which you as well as I judged necessary, before the work could be fitted to meet the public eye?" To this my gentleman saw it necessary to make a direct answer, for my manner was impressive, and my tone decisive. His native audacity enabled him, however, to keep his ground, and he answered with firmness—

"Mr Cleishbotham, in the first place, these manuscripts, over which you claim a very doubtful right, were never given to any one by me, and must have been sent to America either by yourself, or by some one of the various gentlemen to whom, I am well aware, you have afforded opportunities of perusing my brother's MS. remains."

"Mr Pattison," I replied, "I beg to remind you that it never could be my intention, either by my own hands, or through those of another, to remit these manuscripts to the press, until, by the alterations which I meditated, and

which you yourself engaged to make, they were rendered fit for public perusal."

Mr Pattison answered me with much heat:—"Sir, I would have you to know, that if I accepted your paltry offer, it was with less regard to its amount, than to the honour and literary fame of my late brother. I foresaw that if I declined it, you would not hesitate to throw the task into incapable hands, or, perhaps, have taken it upon yourself, the most unfit of all men to tamper with the works of departed genius, and that, God willing, I was determined to prevent—but the justice of Heaven has taken the matter into its own hands. Peter Pattison's last labours shall now go down to posterity unscathed by the scalping-knife of alteration, in the hands of a false friend—shame on the thought that the unnatural weapon could ever be wielded by the hand of a brother!"

I heard this speech not without a species of vertigo or dizziness in my head, which would probably have struck me lifeless at his feet, had not a thought like that of the old ballad—

"Earl Percy sees my fall,"

called to my recollection, that I should only

afford an additional triumph by giving way to my feelings in the presence of Mr Paul Pattison, who, I could not doubt, must be more or less directly at the bottom of the Transatlantic publication, and had in one way or another found his own interest in that nefarious transaction.

To get quit of his odious presence I bid him an unceremonious good-night, and marched down the glen with the air not of one who has parted with a friend, but who rather has shaken off an intrusive companion. On the road I pondered the whole matter over with an anxiety which did not in the smallest degree tend to relieve me. Had I felt adequate to the exertion, I might, of course, have supplanted this spurious edition (of which the literary gazettes are already doling out copious specimens) by introducing into a copy, to be instantly published at Edinburgh, adequate correction of the various inconsistencies and imperfections which have already been alluded to. I remember the easy victory of the real second part of these "Tales of my Landlord" over the performance sent forth by an interloper under the same title; and why should

not the same triumph be repeated now? There would, in short, have been a pride of talent in this manner of avenging myself, which would have been justifiable in the case of an injured man; but the state of my health has for some time been such as to render any attempt of this nature in every way imprudent.

Under such circumstances, the last "Remains" of Peter Pattison must even be accepted, as they were left in his desk; and I humbly retire in the hope that, such as they are, they may receive the indulgence of those who have ever been but too merciful to the productions of his pen, and in all respects to the courteous reader's obliged servant,

J. C.

GANDERCLEUCH,
15*th Oct.* 1831.

COUNT ROBERT OF PARIS.

COUNT ROBERT OF PARIS.

CHAPTER I.

Leontius. ——— That power that kindly spreads
The clouds, a signal of impending showers,
To warn the wandering linnet to the shade,
Beheld without concern expiring Greece,
And not one prodigy foretold our fate.
Demetrius. A thousand horrid prodigies foretold it.
A feeble government, eluded laws,
A factious populace, luxurious nobles,
And all the maladies of sinking states.
When public villainy, too strong for justice,
Shows his bold front, the harbinger of ruin,
Can brave Leontius call for airy wonders,
Which cheats interpret, and which fools regard?
Irene, Act I.

THE close observers of vegetable nature have remarked, that when a new graft is taken from an aged tree, it possesses indeed in exterior form the appearance of a youthful shoot, but has in fact attained to the same state of maturity, or even decay, which has been reached by the parent stem. Hence, it is said, arises the general decline and death that about the same season is often observed

to spread itself through individual trees of some particular species, all of which, deriving their vital powers from the parent stock, are therefore incapable of protracting their existence longer than it does.

In the same manner, efforts have been made by the mighty of the earth to transplant large cities, states, and communities, by one great and sudden exertion, expecting to secure to the new capital the wealth, the dignity, the magnificent decorations and unlimited extent of the ancient city, which they desire to renovate; while, at the same time, they hope to begin a new succession of ages from the date of the new structure, to last, they imagine, as long, and with as much fame, as its predecessor, which the founder hopes his new metropolis may replace in all its youthful glories. But nature has her laws, which seem to apply to the social, as well as the vegetable system. It appears to be a general rule, that what is to last long should be slowly matured and gradually improved, while every sudden effort, however gigantic, to bring about the speedy execution of a plan calculated to endure for ages, is doomed to exhibit symptoms of premature decay from its very commencement. Thus, in a beautiful oriental tale, a dervise explains to the sultan how he had reared the magnificent trees among which they walked, by nursing their shoots from the seed; and the prince's pride is damped when he reflects, that those plantations, so simply raised, were gathering new vigour from each returning sun, while his own exhausted cedars, which

had been transplanted by one violent effort, were drooping their majestic heads in the Valley of Orez.*

It has been allowed, I believe, by all men of taste, many of whom have been late visitants of Constantinople, that if it were possible to survey the whole globe with a view to fixing a seat of universal empire, all who are capable of making such a choice, would give their preference to the city of Constantine, as including the great recommendations of beauty, wealth, security, and eminence. Yet with all these advantages of situation and climate, and with all the architectural splendour of its churches and halls, its quarries of marble, and its treasure-houses of gold, the imperial founder must himself have learned, that although he could employ all these rich materials in obedience to his own wish, it was the mind of man itself, those intellectual faculties refined by the ancients to the highest degree, which had produced the specimens of talent at which men paused and wondered, whether as subjects of art or of moral labour. The power of the Emperor might indeed strip other cities of their statues and their shrines, in order to decorate that which he had fixed upon as his new capital; but the men who had performed great actions, and those, almost equally esteemed, by whom such deeds were celebrated, in poetry, in painting, and in music, had ceased to exist. The nation, though still the most civilized in the world,

* Tale of Mirglip the Persian, in the Tales of the Genii.

had passed beyond that period of society, when the desire of fair fame is of itself the sole or chief motive for the labour of the historian or the poet, the painter or the statuary. The slavish and despotic constitution introduced into the empire, had long since entirely destroyed that public spirit which animated the free history of Rome, leaving nothing but feeble recollections, which produced no emulation.

To speak as of an animated substance, if Constantine could have regenerated his new metropolis, by transfusing into it the vital and vivifying principles of old Rome,—that brilliant spark no longer remained for Constantinople to borrow, or for Rome to lend.

In one most important circumstance, the state of the capital of Constantine had been totally changed, and unspeakably to its advantage. The world was now Christian, and, with the Pagan code, had got rid of its load of disgraceful superstition. Nor is there the least doubt, that the better faith produced its natural and desirable fruits in society, in gradually ameliorating the hearts, and taming the passions, of the people. But while many of the converts were turning meekly towards their new creed, some, in the arrogance of their understanding, were limiting the Scriptures by their own devices, and others failed not to make religious character or spiritual rank the means of rising to temporal power. Thus it happened at this critical period, that the effects of this great change in the religion of the country, although producing an im-

mediate harvest, as well as sowing much good seed which was to grow hereafter, did not, in the fourth century, flourish so as to shed at once that predominating influence which its principles might have taught men to expect.

Even the borrowed splendour, in which Constantine decked his city, bore in it something which seemed to mark premature decay. The imperial founder, in seizing upon the ancient statues, pictures, obelisks, and works of art, acknowledged his own incapacity to supply their place with the productions of later genius; and when the world, and particularly Rome, was plundered to adorn Constantinople, the Emperor, under whom the work was carried on, might be compared to a prodigal youth, who strips an aged parent of her youthful ornaments, in order to decorate a flaunting paramour, on whose brow all must consider them as misplaced.

Constantinople, therefore, when in 324 it first arose in imperial majesty out of the humble Byzantium, showed, even in its birth, and amid its adventitious splendour, as we have already said, some intimations of that speedy decay to which the whole civilized world, then limited within the Roman empire, was internally and imperceptibly tending. Nor was it many ages ere these prognostications of declension were fully verified.

In the year 1080, Alexius Comnenus* ascended the throne of the Empire; that is, he was declared

* See Gibbon, Chap. XLVIII., for the origin and early history of the house of the Comneni.

sovereign of Constantinople, its precincts and dependencies; nor, if he was disposed to lead a life of relaxation, would the savage incursions of the Scythians or the Hungarians frequently disturb the imperial slumbers, if limited to his own capital. It may be supposed that this safety did not extend much farther; for it is said that the Empress Pulcheria had built a church to the Virgin Mary, as remote as possible from the gate of the city, to save her devotions from the risk of being interrupted by the hostile yell of the barbarians, and the reigning Emperor had constructed a palace near the same spot, and for the same reason.

Alexius Comnenus was in the condition of a monarch who rather derives consequence from the wealth and importance of his predecessors, and the great extent of their original dominions, than from what remnants of fortune had descended to the present generation. This Emperor, except nominally, no more ruled over his dismembered provinces, than a half-dead horse can exercise power over those limbs, on which the hooded crow and the vulture have already begun to settle and select their prey.

In different parts of his territory, different enemies arose, who waged successful or dubious war against the Emperor; and, of the numerous nations with whom he was engaged in hostilities, whether the Franks from the west, the Turks advancing from the east, the Cumans and Scythians pouring their barbarous numbers and unceasing storm of arrows from the north, and the Saracens, or the

tribes into which they were divided, pressing from the south, there was not one for whom the Grecian empire did not spread a tempting repast. Each of these various enemies had their own particular habits of war, and a way of manœuvring in battle peculiar to themselves. But the Roman, as the unfortunate subject of the Greek empire was still called, was by far the weakest, the most ignorant, and most timid, who could be dragged into the field; and the Emperor was happy in his own good luck, when he found it possible to conduct a defensive war on a counterbalancing principle, making use of the Scythian to repel the Turk, or of both these savage people to drive back the fiery-footed Frank, whom Peter the Hermit had, in the time of Alexius, waked to double fury, by the powerful influence of the crusades.

If, therefore, Alexius Comnenus was, during his anxious seat upon the throne of the East, reduced to use a base and truckling course of policy,—if he was sometimes reluctant to fight when he had a conscious doubt of the valour of his troops,—if he commonly employed cunning and dissimulation instead of wisdom, and perfidy instead of courage—his expedients were the disgrace of the age, rather than his own.

Again, the Emperor Alexius may be blamed for affecting a degree of state which was closely allied to imbecility. He was proud of assuming in his own person, and of bestowing upon others, the painted show of various orders of nobility, even now, when the rank within the prince's gift was

become an additional reason for the free barbarian despising the imperial noble. That the Greek court was encumbered with unmeaning ceremonies, in order to make amends for the want of that veneration which ought to have been called forth by real worth, and the presence of actual power, was not the particular fault of that prince, but belonged to the system of the government of Constantinople for ages. Indeed, in its trumpery etiquette, which provided rules for the most trivial points of a man's behaviour during the day, the Greek empire resembled no existing power in its minute follies, except that of Pekin; both, doubtless, being influenced by the same vain wish, to add seriousness and an appearance of importance to objects, which, from their trivial nature, could admit no such distinction.

Yet thus far we must justify Alexius, that, humble as were the expedients he had recourse to, they were more useful to his empire than the measures of a more proud and high-spirited prince might have proved in the same circumstances. He was no champion to break a lance against the breastplate of his Frankish rival, the famous Bohemond of Antioch,* but there were many occasions on which he hazarded his life freely; and, so far as

* Bohemond, son of Robert Guiscard, the Norman conqueror of Apulia, Calabria, and Sicily, was, at the time when the first crusade began, Count of Tarentum. Though far advanced in life, he eagerly joined the expedition of the Latins, and became Prince of Antioch. For details of his adventures, death, and extraordinary character, see Gibbon, Chap. LIX., and Mills' History of the Crusades, Vol. I.

we can see, from a minute perusal of his achievements, the Emperor of Greece was never so dangerous "under shield," as when any foeman desired to stop him while retreating from a conflict in which he had been worsted.

But, besides that he did not hesitate, according to the custom of the time, at least occasionally, to commit his person to the perils of close combat, Alexius also possessed such knowledge of a general's profession, as is required in our modern days. He knew how to occupy military positions to the best advantage, and often covered defeats, or improved dubious conflicts, in a manner highly to the disappointment of those who deemed that the work of war was done only on the field of battle.

If Alexius Comnenus thus understood the evolutions of war, he was still better skilled in those of politics, where, soaring far above the express purpose of his immediate negotiation, the Emperor was sure to gain some important and permanent advantage; though very often he was ultimately defeated by the unblushing fickleness, or avowed treachery, of the barbarians, as the Greeks generally termed all other nations, and particularly those tribes, (they can hardly be termed states,) by which their own empire was surrounded.

We may conclude our brief character of Comnenus, by saying, that, had he not been called on to fill the station of a monarch who was under the necessity of making himself dreaded, as one who was exposed to all manner of conspiracies, both in and out of his own family, he might, in all proba-

bility, have been regarded as an honest and humane prince. Certainly he showed himself a good-natured man, and dealt less in cutting off heads and extinguishing eyes, than had been the practice of his predecessors, who generally took this method of shortening the ambitious views of competitors.

It remains to be mentioned, that Alexius had his full share of the superstition of the age, which he covered with a species of hypocrisy. It is even said, that his wife, Irene, who of course was best acquainted with the real character of the Emperor, taxed her dying husband with practising, in his last moments, the dissimulation which had been his companion during life.* He took also a deep interest in all matters respecting the church, where heresy, which the Emperor held, or affected to hold, in great horror, appeared to him to lurk. Nor do we discover in his treatment of the Manichæans, or Paulicians, that pity for their speculative errors, which modern times might think had been well purchased by the extent of the temporal services of these unfortunate sectaries. Alexius knew no indulgence for those who misinterpreted the mysteries of the church, or of its doctrines; and the duty of defending religion against schismatics was, in his opinion, as peremptorily demanded from him, as that of protecting the empire against the numberless tribes of barbarians who were encroaching on its boundaries on every side.

Such a mixture of sense and weakness, of mean-

* See Gibbon, Chap. LVI.

ness and dignity, of prudent discretion and poverty of spirit, which last, in the European mode of viewing things, approached to cowardice, formed the leading traits of the character of Alexius Comnenus, at a period when the fate of Greece, and all that was left in that country of art and civilisation, was trembling in the balance, and likely to be saved or lost, according to the abilities of the Emperor for playing the very difficult game which was put into his hands.

These few leading circumstances will recall, to any one who is tolerably well read in history, the peculiarities of the period at which we have found a resting-place for the foundation of our story.

CHAPTER II.

Othus. ——————This superb successor
Of the earth's mistress, as thou vainly speakest,
Stands midst these ages as, on the wide ocean,
The last spared fragment of a spacious land,
That in some grand and awful ministration
Of mighty nature has engulfed been,
Doth lift aloft its dark and rocky cliffs
O'er the wild waste around, and sadly frowns
In lonely majesty.

Constantine Paleologus, Scene I.

Our scene in the capital of the Eastern Empire opens at what is termed the Golden Gate of Constantinople; and it may be said in passing, that this splendid epithet is not so lightly bestowed as may be expected from the inflated language of the Greeks, which throws such an appearance of exaggeration about them, their buildings, and monuments.

The massive, and seemingly impregnable walls with which Constantine surrounded the city, were greatly improved and added to by Theodosius, called the Great. A triumphal arch, decorated with the architecture of a better, though already a degenerate age, and serving, at the same time, as an useful entrance, introduced the stranger into the

city. On the top, a statue of bronze represented Victory, the goddess who had inclined the scales of battle in favour of Theodosius; and, as the artist determined to be wealthy if he could not be tasteful, the gilded ornaments with which the inscriptions were set off, readily led to the popular name of the gate. Figures carved in a distant and happier period of the art, glanced from the walls, without assorting happily with the taste in which these were built. The more modern ornaments of the Golden Gate bore, at the period of our story, an aspect very different from those indicating the "conquest brought back to the city," and "the eternal peace" which the flattering inscriptions recorded as having been extorted by the sword of Theodosius. Four or five military engines, for throwing darts of the largest size, were placed upon the summit of the arch; and what had been originally designed as a specimen of architectural embellishment, was now applied to the purposes of defence.

It was the hour of evening, and the cool and refreshing breeze from the sea inclined each passenger, whose business was not of a very urgent description, to loiter on his way, and cast a glance at the romantic gateway, and the various interesting objects of nature and art, which the city of Constantinople presented, as well to the inhabitants as to strangers.*

One individual, however, seemed to indulge more wonder and curiosity than could have been expected from a native of the city, and looked upon the

* Note I. p. 56. Constantinople.

rarities around with a quick and startled eye, that marked an imagination awakened by sights that were new and strange. The appearance of this person bespoke a foreigner of military habits, who seemed, from his complexion, to have his birth-place far from the Grecian metropolis, whatever chance had at present brought him to the Golden Gate, or whatever place he filled in the Emperor's service.

This young man was about two-and-twenty years old, remarkably finely-formed and athletic—qualities well understood by the citizens of Constantinople, whose habits of frequenting the public games had taught them at least an acquaintance with the human person, and where, in the select of their own countrymen, they saw the handsomest specimens of the human race.

These were, however, not generally so tall as the stranger at the Golden Gate, while his piercing blue eyes, and the fair hair which descended from under a light helmet gaily ornamented with silver, bearing on its summit a crest resembling a dragon in the act of expanding its terrible jaws, intimated a northern descent, to which the extreme purity of his complexion also bore witness. His beauty, however, though he was eminently distinguished both in features and in person, was not liable to the charge of effeminacy. From this it was rescued, both by his strength, and by the air of confidence and self-possession with which the youth seemed to regard the wonders around him, not indicating the stupid and helpless gaze of a mind equally in-

experienced, and incapable of receiving instruction, but expressing the bold intellect which at once understands the greater part of the information which it receives, and commands the spirit to toil in search of the meaning of that which it has not comprehended, or may fear it has misinterpreted. This look of awakened attention and intelligence gave interest to the young barbarian; and while the bystanders were amazed that a savage from some unknown or remote corner of the universe should possess a noble countenance bespeaking a mind so elevated, they respected him for the composure with which he witnessed so many things, the fashion, the splendour, nay, the very use of which, must have been recently new to him.

The young man's personal equipments exhibited a singular mixture of splendour and effeminacy, and enabled the experienced spectators to ascertain his nation, and the capacity in which he served. We have already mentioned the fanciful and crested helmet, which was a distinction of the foreigner, to which the reader must add in his imagination a small cuirass, or breastplate of silver, so sparingly fashioned as obviously to afford little security to the broad chest, on which it rather hung like an ornament than covered as a buckler; nor, if a well-thrown dart, or strongly-shod arrow, should alight full on this rich piece of armour, was there much hope that it could protect the bosom which it partially shielded.

From betwixt the shoulders hung down over the back what had the appearance of a bearskin; but,

when more closely examined, it was only a very skilful imitation of the spoils of the chase, being in reality a surcoat composed of strong shaggy silk, so woven as to exhibit, at a little distance, no inaccurate representation of a bear's hide. A light crooked sword, or scimitar, sheathed in a scabbard of gold and ivory, hung by the left side of the stranger, the ornamented hilt of which appeared much too small for the large-jointed hand of the young Hercules who was thus gaily attired. A dress, purple in colour, and sitting close to the limbs, covered the body of the soldier to a little above the knee; from thence the knees and legs were bare to the calf, to which the reticulated strings of the sandals rose from the instep, the ligatures being there fixed by a golden coin of the reigning Emperor, converted into a species of clasp for the purpose.

But a weapon which seemed more particularly adapted to the young barbarian's size, and incapable of being used by a man of less formidable limbs and sinews, was a battle-axe, the firm iron-guarded staff of which was formed of tough elm, strongly inlaid and defended with brass, while many a plate and ring were indented in the handle, to hold the wood and the steel parts together. The axe itself was composed of two blades, turning different ways, with a sharp steel spike projecting from between them. The steel part, both spike and blade, was burnished as bright as a mirror; and though its ponderous size must have been burdensome to one weaker than himself, yet the young soldier carried

it as carelessly along, as if it were but a feather's weight. It was, indeed, a skilfully constructed weapon, so well balanced, that it was much lighter in striking and in recovery, than he who saw it in the hands of another could easily have believed.

The carrying arms of itself showed that the military man was a stranger. The native Greeks had that mark of a civilized people, that they never bore weapons during the time of peace, unless the wearer chanced to be numbered among those whose military profession and employment required them to be always in arms. Such soldiers by profession were easily distinguished from the peaceful citizens; and it was with some evident show of fear as well as dislike, that the passengers observed to each other, that the stranger was a Varangian, an expression which intimated a barbarian of the imperial body-guard.

To supply the deficiency of valour among his own subjects, and to procure soldiers who should be personally dependent on the Emperor, the Greek sovereigns had been, for a great many years, in the custom of maintaining in their pay, as near their person as they could, the steady services of a select number of mercenaries in the capacity of body-guards, which were numerous enough, when their steady discipline and inflexible loyalty were taken in conjunction with their personal strength and indomitable courage, to defeat, not only any traitorous attempt on the imperial person, but to quell open rebellions, unless such were supported by a great proportion of the military force. Their pay

was therefore liberal; their rank and established character for prowess gave them a degree of consideration among the people, whose reputation for valour had not for some ages stood high; and if, as foreigners, and the members of a privileged body, the Varangians were sometimes employed in arbitrary and unpopular services, the natives were so apt to fear, while they disliked them, that the hardy strangers disturbed themselves but little about the light in which they were regarded by the inhabitants of Constantinople. Their dress and accoutrements, while within the city, partook of the rich, or rather gaudy costume, which we have described, bearing only a sort of affected resemblance to that which the Varangians wore in their native forests. But the individuals of this select corps were, when their services were required beyond the city, furnished with armour and weapons more resembling those which they were accustomed to wield in their own country, possessing much less of the splendour of war, and a far greater portion of its effective terrors; and thus they were summoned to take the field.

This body of Varangians (which term is, according to one interpretation, merely a general expression for barbarians) was, in an early age of the empire, formed of the roving and piratical inhabitants of the north, whom a love of adventure, the greatest perhaps that ever was indulged, and a contempt of danger, which never had a parallel in the history of human nature, drove forth upon the pathless ocean. "Piracy," says Gibbon, with his usual

spirit, " was the exercise, the trade, the glory, and the virtue of the Scandinavian youth. Impatient of a bleak climate and narrow limits, they started from the banquet, grasped their arms, sounded their horn, ascended their ships, and explored every coast that promised either spoil or settlement."*

The conquests made in France and Britain by these wild sea-kings, as they were called, have obscured the remembrance of other northern champions, who, long before the time of Comnenus, made excursions as far as Constantinople, and witnessed with their own eyes the wealth and the weakness of the Grecian empire itself. Numbers found their way thither through the pathless wastes of Russia; others navigated the Mediterranean in their sea-serpents, as they termed their piratical vessels. The Emperors, terrified at the appearance of these daring inhabitants of the frozen zone, had recourse to the usual policy of a rich and unwarlike people, bought with gold the service of their swords, and thus formed a corps of satellites more distinguished for valour than the famed Prætorian Bands of Rome, and, perhaps, because fewer in number, unalterably loyal to their new princes.

But, at a later period of the empire, it began to be more difficult for the Emperors to obtain recruits for their favourite and selected corps, the northern nations having now in a great measure laid aside the piratical and roving habits, which had driven their ancestors from the straits of Elsi-

* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. Chapter LV. Vol. X. p. 221, 8vo edition.

nore to those of Sestos and Abydos. The corps of the Varangians must therefore have died out, or have been filled up with less worthy materials, had not the conquests made by the Normans in the far distant west, sent to the aid of Comnenus a large body of the dispossessed inhabitants of the islands of Britain, and particularly of England, who furnished recruits to his chosen body-guard. These were, in fact, Anglo-Saxons; but, in the confused idea of geography received at the court of Constantinople, they were naturally enough called Anglo-Danes, as their native country was confounded with the Thule of the ancients, by which expression the archipelago of Zetland and Orkney is properly to be understood, though, according to the notions of the Greeks, it comprised either Denmark or Britain. The emigrants, however, spoke a language not very dissimilar to the original Varangians, and adopted the name more readily, that it seemed to remind them of their unhappy fate, the appellation being in one sense capable of being interpreted as exiles. Excepting one or two chief commanders, whom the Emperor judged worthy of such high trust, the Varangians were officered by men of their own nation; and with so many privileges, being joined by many of their countrymen from time to time, as the crusades, pilgrimages, or discontent at home, drove fresh supplies of the Anglo-Saxons, or Anglo-Danes, to the east, the Varangians subsisted in strength to the last days of the Greek empire, retaining their native language, along with the unblemished loyalty, and

unabated martial spirit, which characterised their fathers.

This account of the Varangian Guard is strictly historical, and might be proved by reference to the Byzantine historians; most of whom, and also Villehardouin's account of the taking of the city of Constantinople by the Franks and Venetians, make repeated mention of this celebrated and singular body of Englishmen, forming a mercenary guard attendant on the person of the Greek Emperors.*

Having said enough to explain why an individual Varangian should be strolling about the Golden Gate, we may proceed in the story which we have commenced.

Let it not be thought extraordinary, that this soldier of the life-guard should be looked upon with some degree of curiosity by the passing citizens. It must be supposed, that, from their peculiar duties, they were not encouraged to hold frequent intercourse or communication with the inhabitants; and, besides that they had duties of police occasionally to exercise amongst them, which made them generally more dreaded than beloved, they were at the same time conscious, that their high pay, splendid appointments, and immediate dependence on the Emperor, were subjects of envy to the other forces. They, therefore, kept much in the neighbourhood

* Ducange has poured forth a tide of learning on this curious subject, which will be found in his Notes on Villehardouin's Constantinople under the French Emperors.—Paris, 1637, folio, p. 196. Gibbon's History may also be consulted, Vol. X. p. 231. [See Note II. at the end of the Chapter.]

of their own barracks, and were seldom seen straggling remote from them, unless they had a commission of government intrusted to their charge.

This being the case, it was natural that a people so curious as the Greeks should busy themselves in eyeing the stranger as he loitered in one spot, or wandered to and fro, like a man who either could not find some place which he was seeking, or had failed to meet some person with whom he had an appointment, for which the ingenuity of the passengers found a thousand different and inconsistent reasons. "A Varangian," said one citizen to another, "and upon duty—ahem! Then I presume to say in your ear"——

"What do you imagine is his object?" enquired the party to whom this information was addressed.

"Gods and goddesses! do you think I can tell you? but suppose that he is lurking here to hear what folk say of the Emperor," answered the *quidnunc* of Constantinople.

"That is not likely," said the querist; "these Varangians do not speak our language, and are not extremely well fitted for spies, since few of them pretend to any intelligible notion of the Grecian tongue. It is not likely, I think, that the Emperor would employ as a spy a man who did not understand the language of the country."

"But if there are, as all men fancy," answered the politician, "persons among these barbarian soldiers who can speak almost all languages, you will admit that such are excellently qualified for seeing

clearly around them, since they possess the talent of beholding and reporting, while no one has the slightest idea of suspecting them."

"It may well be," replied his companion; "but since we see so clearly the fox's foot and paws protruding from beneath the seeming sheep's fleece, or rather, by your leave, the *bear's* hide yonder, had we not better be jogging homeward, ere it be pretended we have insulted a Varangian Guard?"

This surmise of danger insinuated by the last speaker, who was a much older and more experienced politician than his friend, determined both on a hasty retreat. They adjusted their cloaks, caught hold of each other's arm, and, speaking fast and thick as they started new subjects of suspicion, they sped, close coupled together, towards their habitations, in a different and distant quarter of the town.

In the meantime, the sunset was nigh over; and the long shadows of the walls, bulwarks, and arches, were projecting from the westward in deeper and blacker shade. The Varangian seemed tired of the short and lingering circle in which he had now trodden for more than an hour, and in which he still loitered like an unliberated spirit, which cannot leave the haunted spot till licensed by the spell which has brought it hither. Even so the barbarian, casting an impatient glance to the sun, which was setting in a blaze of light behind a rich grove of cypress-trees, looked for some accommodation on the benches of stone which were placed under shadow of the triumphal arch of Theodosius, drew

the axe, which was his principal weapon, close to his side, wrapped his cloak about him, and, though his dress was not in other respects a fit attire for slumber, any more than the place well selected for repose, yet in less than three minutes he was fast asleep. The irresistible impulse which induced him to seek for repose in a place very indifferently fitted for the purpose, might be weariness consequent upon the military vigils, which had proved a part of his duty on the preceding evening. At the same time, his spirit was so alive within him, even while he gave way to this transient fit of oblivion, that he remained almost awake even with shut eyes, and no hound ever seemed to sleep more lightly than our Anglo-Saxon at the Golden Gate of Constantinople.

And now the slumberer, as the loiterer had been before, was the subject of observation to the accidental passengers. Two men entered the porch in company. One was a somewhat slight-made, but alert-looking man, by name Lysimachus, and by profession a designer. A roll of paper in his hand, with a little satchel containing a few chalks, or pencils, completed his stock in trade; and his acquaintance with the remains of ancient art gave him a power of talking on the subject, which unfortunately bore more than due proportion to his talents of execution. His companion, a magnificent-looking man in form, and so far resembling the young barbarian, but more clownish and peasant-like in the expression of his features, was Stephanos the wrestler, well known in the Palestra.

"Stop here, my friend," said the artist, producing his pencils, "till I make a sketch for my youthful Hercules."

"I thought Hercules had been a Greek," said the wrestler. "This sleeping animal is a barbarian."

The tone intimated some offence, and the designer hastened to soothe the displeasure which he had thoughtlessly excited. Stephanos, known by the surname of Castor, who was highly distinguished for gymnastic exercises, was a sort of patron to the little artist, and not unlikely by his own reputation to bring the talents of his friend into notice.

"Beauty and strength," said the adroit artist, "are of no particular nation; and may our Muse never deign me her prize, but it is my greatest pleasure to compare them, as existing in the uncultivated savage of the north, and when they are found in the darling of an enlightened people, who has added the height of gymnastic skill to the most distinguished natural qualities, such as we can now only see in the works of Phidias and Praxiteles—or in our living model of the gymnastic champions of antiquity."

"Nay, I acknowledge that the Varangian is a proper man," said the athletic hero, softening his tone; "but the poor savage hath not, perhaps in his lifetime, had a single drop of oil on his bosom! Hercules instituted the Isthmian Games"——

"But, hold! what sleeps he with, wrapt so

close in his bear-skin?" said the artist. "Is it a club?"

"Away, away, my friend!" cried Stephanos, as they looked closer on the sleeper. "Do you not know that is the instrument of their barbarous office? They do not war with swords or lances, as if destined to attack men of flesh and blood; but with maces and axes, as if they were to hack limbs formed of stone, and sinews of oak. I will wager my crown [of withered parsley] that he lies here to arrest some distinguished commander who has offended the government! He would not have been thus formidably armed otherwise—Away, away, good Lysimachus; let us respect the slumbers of the bear."

So saying, the champion of the Palestra made off with less apparent confidence than his size and strength might have inspired.

Others, now thinly straggling, passed onward as the evening closed, and the shadows of the cypress-trees fell darker around. Two females of the lower rank cast their eyes on the sleeper. "Holy Maria!" said one, "if he does not put me in mind of the Eastern tale, how the Genie brought a gallant young prince from his nuptial chamber in Egypt, and left him sleeping at the gate of Damascus. I will awake the poor lamb, lest he catch harm from the night dew."

"Harm?" answered the older and crosser-looking woman. "Ay, such harm as the cold water of the Cydnus does to the wild swan. A lamb?—

ay, forsooth! Why he's a wolf or a bear, at least a Varangian, and no modest matron would exchange a word with such an unmannered barbarian. I'll tell you what one of these English Danes did to me"——

So saying, she drew on her companion, who followed with some reluctance, seeming to listen to her gabble, while she looked back upon the sleeper.

The total disappearance of the sun, and nearly at the same time the departure of the twilight which lasts so short time in that tropical region—one of the few advantages which a more temperate climate possesses over it, being the longer continuance of that sweet and placid light—gave signal to the warders of the city to shut the folding leaves of the Golden Gate, leaving a wicket lightly bolted for the passage of those whom business might have detained too late without the walls, and indeed for all who chose to pay a small coin. The position and apparent insensibility of the Varangian did not escape those who had charge of the gate, of whom there was a strong guard which belonged to the ordinary Greek forces.

"By Castor and by Pollux," said the centurion,—for the Greeks swore by the ancient deities, although they no longer worshipped them, and preserved those military distinctions with which "the steady Romans shook the world," although they were altogether degenerated from their original manners,—"By Castor and Pollux, comrades, we cannot gather gold in this gate, according as its legend tells us: yet it will be our fault if we can-

not glean a goodly crop of silver; and though the golden age be the most ancient and honourable, yet in this degenerate time it is much if we see a glimpse of the inferior metal."

"Unworthy are we to follow the noble centurion Harpax," answered one of the soldiers of the watch, who showed the shaven head and the single tuft* of a Mussulman, "if we do not hold silver a sufficient cause to bestir ourselves, when there has been no gold to be had—as, by the faith of an honest man, I think we can hardly tell its colour, —whether out of the imperial treasury, or obtained at the expense of individuals, for many long moons!"

"But this silver," said the centurion, "thou shalt see with thine own eye, and hear it ring a knell in the purse which holds our common stock."

"Which *did* hold it, as thou wouldst say, most valiant commander," replied the inferior warder; "but what that purse holds now, save a few miserable oboli for purchasing certain pickled potherbs and salt fish, to relish our allowance of stummed wine, I cannot tell, but willingly give my share of the contents to the devil, if either purse or platter exhibits symptom of any age richer than the age of copper."

"I will replenish our treasury," said the centurion, "were our stock yet lower than it is. Stand up close by the wicket, my masters. Bethink you,

* One tuft is left on the shaven crown of the Moslem, for the angel to grasp by, when conveying him to Paradise.

we are the Imperial Guards, or the guards of the Imperial City, it is all one, and let us have no man rush past us on a sudden;—and now that we are on our guard, I will unfold to you——But stop," said the valiant centurion, "are we all here true brothers? Do all well understand the ancient and laudable customs of our watch,—keeping all things secret which concern the profit and advantage of this our vigil, and aiding and abetting the common cause, without information or treachery?"

"You are strangely suspicious to-night," answered the sentinel. "Methinks we have stood by you without tale-telling in matters which were more weighty. Have you forgot the passage of the jeweller—which was neither the gold nor silver age; but if there were a diamond one"——

"Peace, good Ismail the Infidel," said the centurion,—"for, I thank Heaven, we are of all religions, so it is to be hoped we must have the true one amongst us,—Peace, I say; it is unnecessary to prove thou canst keep new secrets, by ripping up old ones. Come hither—look through the wicket to the stone bench, on the shady side of the grand porch—tell me, old lad, what dost thou see there?"

"A man asleep," said Ismail. "By Heaven, I think from what I can see by the moonlight, that it is one of those barbarians, one of those island dogs, whom the Emperor sets such store by!"

"And can thy fertile brain," said the centurion, "spin nothing out of his present situation, tending towards our advantage?"

"Why, ay," said Ismail; "they have large pay,

though they are not only barbarians, but pagan dogs, in comparison with us Moslems and Nazarenes. That fellow hath besotted himself with liquor, and hath not found his way home to his barracks in good time. He will be severely punished, unless we consent to admit him; and to prevail on us to do so, he must empty the contents of his girdle."

"That, at least—that, at least," answered the soldiers of the city watch, but carefully suppressing their voices, though they spoke in an eager tone.

"And is that all that you would make of such an opportunity?" said Harpax, scornfully. "No, no, comrades. If this outlandish animal indeed escape us, he must at least leave his fleece behind. See you not the gleams from his headpiece and his cuirass? I presume these betoken substantial silver, though it may be of the thinnest. There lies the silver mine I spoke of, ready to enrich the dexterous hands who shall labour it."

"But," said timidly, a young Greek, a companion of their watch lately enlisted in the corps, and unacquainted with their habits, "still this barbarian, as you call him, is a soldier of the Emperor; and if we are convicted of depriving him of his arms, we shall be justly punished for a military crime."

"Hear to a new Lycurgus come to teach us our duty!" said the centurion. "Learn first, young man, that the metropolitan cohort never can commit a crime, and learn next, of course, that they

can never be convicted of one. Suppose we found a straggling barbarian, a Varangian, like this slumberer, perhaps a Frank, or some other of these foreigners bearing unpronounceable names, while they dishonour us by putting on the arms and apparel of the real Roman soldier, are we, placed to defend an important post, to admit a man so suspicious within our postern, when the event may probably be to betray both the Golden Gate and the hearts of gold who guard it,—to have the one seized, and the throats of the others handsomely cut?"

"Keep him without side the gate, then," replied the novice, "if you think him so dangerous. For my part, I should not fear him, were he deprived of that huge double-edged axe, which gleams from under his cloak, having a more deadly glare than the comet which astrologers prophesy such strange things of."

"Nay, then, we agree together," answered Harpax, "and you speak like a youth of modesty and sense; and I promise you the state will lose nothing in the despoiling of this same barbarian. Each of these savages hath a double set of accoutrements, the one wrought with gold, silver, inlaid work, and ivory, as becomes their duties in the prince's household; the other fashioned of triple steel, strong, weighty, and irresistible. Now, in taking from this suspicious character his silver helmet and cuirass, you reduce him to his proper weapons, and you will see him start up in arms fit for duty."

"Yes," said the novice; "but I do not see that this reasoning will do more than warrant our stripping the Varangian of his armour, to be afterwards heedfully returned to him on the morrow, if he prove a true man. How, I know not, but I had adopted some idea that it was to be confiscated for our joint behoof."

"Unquestionably," said Harpax; "for such has been the rule of our watch ever since the days of the excellent centurion Sisyphus, in whose time it first was determined, that all contraband commodities, or suspicious weapons, or the like, which were brought into the city during the night-watch, should be uniformly forfeited to the use of the soldiery of the guard; and where the Emperor finds the goods or arms unjustly seized, I hope he is rich enough to make it up to the sufferer."

"But still—but still," said Sebastes of Mitylene, the young Greek aforesaid, "were the Emperor to discover"——

"Ass!" replied Harpax, "he cannot discover, if he had all the eyes of Argus's tail.—Here are twelve of us, sworn, according to the rules of the watch, to abide in the same story. Here is a barbarian, who, if he remembers any thing of the matter—which I greatly doubt—his choice of a lodging arguing his familiarity with the wine-pot—tells but a wild tale of losing his armour, which we, my masters," (looking round to his companions,) "deny stoutly—I hope we have courage enough for that—and which party will be believed? The companions of the watch, surely!"

"Quite the contrary," said Sebastes. "I was born at a distance from hence; yet, even in the island of Mitylene, the rumour had reached me that the cavaliers of the city-guard of Constantinople were so accomplished in falsehood, that the oath of a single barbarian would outweigh the Christian oath of the whole body, if Christian some of them are—for example, this dark man with a single tuft on his head."

"And if it were even so," said the centurion, with a gloomy and sinister look, "there is another way of making the transaction a safe one."

Sebastes, fixing his eye on his commander, moved his hand to the hilt of an Eastern poniard which he wore, as if to penetrate his exact meaning. The centurion nodded in acquiescence.

"Young as I am," said Sebastes, "I have been already a pirate five years at sea, and a robber three years now in the hills, and it is the first time I have seen or heard a man hesitate, in such a case, to take the only part which is worth a brave man's while to resort to in a pressing affair."

Harpax struck his hand into that of the soldier, as sharing his uncompromising sentiments; but when he spoke, it was in a tremulous voice.

"How shall we deal with him?" said he to Sebastes, who, from the most raw recruit in the corps, had now risen to the highest place in his estimation.

"Any how," returned the islander; "I see bows here and shafts, and if no other person can use them"——

"They are not," said the centurion, "the regular arms of our corps."

"The fitter you to guard the gates of a city," said the young soldier with a horse-laugh, which had something insulting in it. "Well—be it so. I can shoot like a Scythian," he proceeded; "nod but with your head, one shaft shall crash among the splinters of his skull and his brains; the second shall quiver in his heart."

"Bravo, my noble comrade!" said Harpax, in a tone of affected rapture, always lowering his voice, however, as respecting the slumbers of the Varangian. "Such were the robbers of ancient days, the Diomedes, Corynetes, Synnes, Scyrons, Procrustes, whom it required demigods to bring to what was miscalled justice, and whose compeers and fellows will remain masters of the continent and the isles of Greece, until Hercules and Theseus shall again appear upon earth. Nevertheless, shoot not, my valiant Sebastes—draw not the bow, my invaluable Mitylenian; you may wound and not kill."

"I am little wont to do so," said Sebastes, again repeating the hoarse, chuckling, discordant laugh, which grated upon the ears of the centurion, though he could hardly tell the reason why it was so uncommonly unpleasant.

"If I look not about me," was his internal reflection, "we shall have two centurions of the watch, instead of one. This Mitylenian, or be he who the devil will, is a bow's length beyond me. I must keep my eye on him." He then spoke aloud, in a

tone of authority. "But come, young man, it is hard to discourage a young beginner. If you have been such a rover of wood and river as you tell us of, you know how to play the Sicarius: there lies your object, drunk or asleep, we know not which;—you will deal with him in either case."

"Will you give me no odds to stab a stupified or drunken man, most noble centurion?" answered the Greek. "You would perhaps love the commission yourself?" he continued, somewhat ironically.

"Do as you are directed, friend," said Harpax, pointing to the turret staircase which led down from the battlement to the arched entrance underneath the porch.

"He has the true cat-like stealthy pace," half muttered the centurion, as his sentinel descended to do such a crime as he was posted there to prevent. "This cockrel's comb must be cut, or he will become king of the roost. But let us see if his hand be as resolute as his tongue; then we will consider what turn to give to the conclusion."

As Harpax spoke between his teeth, and rather to himself than any of his companions, the Mitylenian emerged from under the archway, treading on tiptoe, yet swiftly, with an admirable mixture of silence and celerity. His poniard, drawn as he descended, gleamed in his hand, which was held a little behind the rest of his person, so as to conceal it. The assassin hovered less than an instant over the sleeper, as if to mark the interval between the

ill-fated silver corslet, and the body which it was designed to protect, when, at the instant the blow was rushing to its descent, the Varangian started up at once, arrested the armed hand of the assassin, by striking it upwards with the head of his battle-axe; and while he thus parried the intended stab, struck the Greek a blow heavier than Sebastes had ever learned at the Pancration, which left him scarce the power to cry help to his comrades on the battlements. They saw what had happened, however, and beheld the barbarian set his foot on their companion, and brandish high his formidable weapon, the whistling sound of which made the old arch ring ominously, while he paused an instant, with his weapon upheaved, ere he gave the finishing blow to his enemy. The warders made a bustle, as if some of them would descend to the assistance of Sebastes, without, however, appearing very eager to do so, when Harpax, in a rapid whisper, commanded them to stand fast.

"Each man to his place," he said, "happen what may. Yonder comes a captain of the guard—the secret is our own, if the savage has killed the Mitylenian, as I well trust, for he stirs neither hand nor foot. But if he lives, my comrades, make hard your faces as flint—he is but one man, we are twelve. We know nothing of his purpose, save that he went to see wherefore the barbarian slept so near the post."

While the centurion thus bruited his purpose in busy insinuation to the companions of his watch, the stately figure of a tall soldier, richly armed, and

presenting a lofty crest, which glistened as he stept from the open moonlight into the shade of the vault, became visible beneath. A whisper passed among the warders on the top of the gate.

"Draw bolt, shut gate, come of the Mitylenian what will," said the centurion; "we are lost men if we own him.—Here comes the chief of the Varangian axes, the Follower himself."

"Well, Hereward," said the officer who came last upon the scene, in a sort of *lingua Franca*, generally used by the barbarians of the guard, "hast thou caught a night-hawk?"

"Ay, by Saint George!" answered the soldier; "and yet, in my country, we would call him but a kite."

"What is he?" said the leader.

"He will tell you that himself," replied the Varangian, "when I take my grasp from his windpipe."

"Let him go, then," said the officer.

The Englishman did as he was commanded; but, escaping as soon as he felt himself at liberty, with an alertness which could scarce have been anticipated, the Mitylenian rushed out at the arch, and, availing himself of the complicated ornaments which had originally graced the exterior of the gateway, he fled around buttress and projection, closely pursued by the Varangian, who, cumbered with his armour, was hardly a match in the course for the light-footed Grecian, as he dodged his pursuer from one skulking place to another. The officer laughed heartily, as the two figures, like

shadows appearing, and disappearing as suddenly, held rapid flight and chase around the arch of Theodosius.

"By Hercules! it is Hector pursued round the walls of Ilion by Achilles," said the officer; "but my Pelides will scarce overtake the son of Priam. What, ho! goddess-born—son of the white-footed Thetis!—But the allusion is lost on the poor savage—Hollo, Hereward! I say, stop—know thine own most barbarous name." These last words were muttered; then raising his voice, "Do not out-run thy wind, good Hereward. Thou mayst have more occasion for breath to-night."

"If it had been my leader's will," answered the Varangian, coming back in sulky mood, and breathing like one who had been at the top of his speed, "I would have had him as fast as ever greyhound held hare, ere I left off the chase. Were it not for this foolish armour, which encumbers without defending one, I would not have made two bounds without taking him by the throat."

"As well as it is," said the officer, who was, in fact, the Accoulouthos, or *Follower*, so called because it was the duty of this highly-trusted officer of the Varangian Guards constantly to attend on the person of the Emperor. "But let us now see by what means we are to regain our entrance through the gate: for if, as I suspect, it was one of those warders who was willing to have played thee a trick, his companions may not let us enter willingly."

"And is it not," said the Varangian, "your

Valour's duty to probe this want of discipline to the bottom?"

"Hush thee here, my simple-minded savage! I have often told you, most ignorant Hereward, that the skulls of those who come from your cold and muddy Bœotia of the North, are fitter to bear out twenty blows with a sledge-hammer, than turn off one witty or ingenious idea. But follow me, Hereward, and although I am aware that showing the fine meshes of Grecian policy to the coarse eye of an unpractised barbarian like thee, is much like casting pearls before swine, a thing forbidden in the Blessed Gospel, yet, as thou hast so good a heart, and so trusty, as is scarce to be met with among my Varangians themselves, I care not if, while thou art in attendance on my person, I endeavour to indoctrinate thee in some of that policy by which I myself—the Follower—the Chief of the Varangians, and therefore erected by their axes into the most valiant of the valiant, am content to guide myself, although every way qualified to bear me through the cross currents of the court by main pull of oar and press of sail—a condescension in me, to do that by policy, which no man in this imperial court, the chosen sphere of superior wits, could so well accomplish by open force as myself. What think'st thou, good savage?"

"I know," answered the Varangian, who walked about a step and a half behind his leader, like an orderly of the present day behind his officer's shoulder, "I should be sorry to trouble my head with what I could do by my hands at once."

"Did I not say so?" replied the Follower, who had now for some minutes led the way from the Golden Gate, and was seen gliding along the outside of the moonlight walls, as if seeking an entrance elsewhere. "Lo, such is the stuff of what you call your head is made! Your hands and arms are perfect Achitophels, compared to it. Hearken to me, thou most ignorant of all animals,—but, for that very reason, thou stoutest of confidents, and bravest of soldiers,—I will tell thee the very riddle of this night-work, and yet, even then, I doubt if thou canst understand me."

"It is my present duty to try to comprehend your Valour," said the Varangian—"I would say your policy, since you condescend to expound it to me. As for your valour," he added, "I should be unlucky if I did not think I understand its length and breadth already."

The Greek general coloured a little, but replied, with unaltered voice, "True, good Hereward. We have seen each other in battle."

Hereward here could not suppress a short cough, which, to those grammarians of the day who were skilful in applying the use of accents, would have implied no peculiar eulogium on his officer's military bravery. Indeed, during their whole intercourse, the conversation of the General, in spite of his tone of affected importance and superiority, displayed an obvious respect for his companion, as one who, in many points of action, might, if brought to the test, prove a more effective soldier than himself. On the other hand, when the power-

ful Northern warrior replied, although it was with all observance of discipline and duty, yet the discussion might sometimes resemble that between an ignorant macaroni officer, before the Duke of York's reformation of the British army, and a steady sergeant of the regiment in which they both served. There was a consciousness of superiority, disguised by external respect, and half admitted by the leader.

"You will grant me, my simple friend," continued the chief, in the same tone as before, "in order to lead thee by a short passage into the deepest principle of policy which pervades this same court of Constantinople, that the favour of the Emperor"—(here the officer raised his casque, and the soldier made a semblance of doing so also)—"who (be the place where he puts his foot sacred!) is the vivifying principle of the sphere in which we live, as the sun itself is that of humanity"——

"I have heard something like this said by our tribunes," said the Varangian.

"It is their duty so to instruct you," answered the leader; "and I trust that the priests also, in their sphere, forget not to teach my Varangians their constant service to their Emperor."

"They do not omit it," replied the soldier, "though we of the exiles know our duty."

"God forbid I should doubt it," said the commander of the battle-axes. "All I mean is to make thee understand, my dear Hereward, that as there are, though perhaps such do not exist in thy dark and gloomy climate, a race of insects which

are born in the first rays of the morning, and expire with those of sunset, (thence called by us ephemeræ, as enduring one day only,) such is the case of a favourite at court, while enjoying the smiles of the most sacred Emperor. And happy is he whose favour, rising as the person of the sovereign emerges from the level space which extends around the throne, displays itself in the first imperial blaze of glory, and who, keeping his post during the meridian splendour of the crown, has only the fate to disappear and die with the last beam of imperial brightness."

"Your Valour," said the islander, "speaks higher language than my northern wits are able to comprehend. Only, methinks, rather than part with life at the sunset, I would, since insect I must needs be, become a moth for two or three dark hours."

"Such is the sordid desire of the vulgar, Hereward," answered the Follower, with assumed superiority, "who are contented to enjoy life, lacking distinction; whereas we, on the other hand, we of choicer quality, who form the nearest and innermost circle around the Imperial Alexius, in which he himself forms the central point, are watchful, to woman's jealousy, of the distribution of his favours, and omit no opportunity, whether by leaguing with or against each other, to recommend ourselves individually to the peculiar light of his countenance."

"I think I comprehend what you mean," said the guardsman; "although as for living such a life of intrigue—but that matters not."

" It does indeed matter not, my good Hereward," said his officer, " and thou art lucky in having no appetite for the life I have described. Yet have I seen barbarians rise high in the empire, and if they have not altogether the flexibility, the malleability, as it is called—that happy ductility which can give way to circumstances, I have yet known those of barbaric tribes, especially if bred up at court from their youth, who joined to a limited portion of this flexile quality enough of a certain tough durability of temper, which, if it does not excel in availing itself of opportunity, has no contemptible talent at creating it. But letting comparisons pass, it follows, from this emulation of glory, that is, of royal favour, amongst the servants of the imperial and most sacred court, that each is desirous of distinguishing himself by showing to the Emperor, not only that he fully understands the duties of his own employments, but that he is capable, in case of necessity, of discharging those of others."

" I understand," said the Saxon ; " and thence it happens that the under ministers, soldiers, and assistants of the great crown-officers, are perpetually engaged, not in aiding each other, but in acting as spies on their neighbours' actions ?"

" Even so," answered the commander ; " it is but few days since I had a disagreeable instance of it. Every one, however dull in the intellect, hath understood this much, that the great Protospathaire,*

* Literally, the First Swordsman.

which title thou knowest signifies the General-in-chief of the forces of the empire, hath me at hatred, because I am the leader of those redoubtable Varangians, who enjoy, and well deserve, privileges exempting them from the absolute command which he possesses over all other corps of the army—an authority which becomes Nicanor, notwithstanding the victorious sound of his name, nearly as well as a war-saddle would become a bullock."

"How!" said the Varangian, "does the Protospathaire pretend to any authority over the noble exiles?—By the red dragon, under which we will live and die, we will obey no man alive but Alexius Comnenus himself, and our own officers!"

"Rightly and bravely resolved," said the leader; "but, my good Hereward, let not your just indignation hurry you so far as to name the most sacred Emperor, without raising your hand to your casque, and adding the epithets of his lofty rank."

"I will raise my hand often enough and high enough," said the Norseman, "when the Emperor's service requires it."

"I dare be sworn thou wilt," said Achilles Tatius, the commander of the Varangian Imperial Body Guard, who thought the time was unfavourable for distinguishing himself by insisting on that exact observance of etiquette, which was one of his great pretensions to the name of a soldier. "Yet, were it not for the constant vigilance of your leader, my child, the noble Varangians would be trode down, in the common mass of the army, with the heathen cohorts of Huns, Scythians, or

those turban'd infidels the renegade Turks; and even for this is your commander here in peril, because he vindicates his axe-men as worthy of being prized above the paltry shafts of the Eastern tribes, and the javelins of the Moors, which are only fit to be playthings for children."

"You are exposed to no danger," said the soldier, closing up to Achilles in a confidential manner, "from which these axes can protect you."

"Do I not know it?" said Achilles. "But it is to your arm alone that the Follower of his most sacred Majesty now intrusts his safety."

"In aught that a soldier may do," answered Hereward; "make your own computation, and then reckon this single arm worth two against any man the Emperor has, not being of our own corps."

"Listen, my brave friend," continued Achilles. "This Nicanor was daring enough to throw a reproach on our noble corps, accusing them—gods and goddesses!—of plundering in the field, and, yet more sacrilegious, of drinking the precious wine which was prepared for his most sacred Majesty's own blessed consumption. I, the sacred person of the Emperor being present, proceeded, as thou mayst well believe"——

"To give him the lie in his audacious throat!" burst in the Varangian—"named a place of meeting somewhere in the vicinity, and called the attendance of your poor follower, Hereward of Hampton, who is your bond-slave for life long, for such an honour! I wish only you had told me to get my

work-day arms; but, however, I have my battle-axe, and"—— Here his companion seized a moment to break in, for he was somewhat abashed at the lively tone of the young soldier.

"Hush thee, my son," said Achilles Tatius; "speak low, my excellent Hereward. Thou mistakest this thing. With thee by my side, I would not, indeed, hesitate to meet five such as Nicanor; but such is not the law of this most hallowed empire, nor the sentiments of the three times illustrious Prince who now rules it. Thou art debauched, my soldier, with the swaggering stories of the Franks, of whom we hear more and more every day."

"I would not willingly borrow any thing from those whom you call Franks, and we Normans," answered the Varangian, in a disappointed, dogged tone.

"Why, listen, then," said the officer, as they proceeded on their walk, "listen to the reason of the thing, and consider whether such a custom can obtain, as that which they term the duello, in any country of civilisation and common sense, to say nothing of one which is blessed with the domination of the most rare Alexius Comnenus. Two great lords, or high officers, quarrel in the court, and before the reverend person of the Emperor. They dispute about a point of fact. Now, instead of each maintaining his own opinion, by argument or evidence, suppose they had adopted the custom of these barbarous Franks,—'Why, thou liest in thy throat,' says the one; 'and thou liest in thy very

lungs,' says another; and they measure forth the lists of battle in the next meadow. Each swears to the truth of his quarrel, though probably neither well knows precisely how the fact stands. One, perhaps the hardier, truer, and better man of the two, the Follower of the Emperor, and father of the Varangians, (for death, my faithful follower, spares no man,) lies dead on the ground, and the other comes back to predominate in the court, where, had the matter been enquired into by the rules of common sense and reason, the victor, as he is termed, would have been sent to the gallows. And yet this is the law of arms, as your fancy pleases to call it, friend Hereward!"

"May it please your Valour," answered the barbarian, "there is a show of sense in what you say; but you will sooner convince me that this blessed moonlight is the blackness of a wolf's mouth, than that I ought to hear myself called liar, without cramming the epithet down the speaker's throat with the spike of my battle-axe. The lie is to a man the same as a blow, and a blow degrades him into a slave and a beast of burden, if endured without retaliation."

"Ay, there it is!" said Achilles; "could I but get you to lay aside that inborn barbarism, which leads you, otherwise the most disciplined soldiers who serve the sacred Emperor, into such deadly quarrels and feuds"——

"Sir Captain," said the Varangian, in a sullen tone, "take my advice, and take the Varangians as you have them; for, believe my word, that if you

could teach them to endure reproaches, bear the lie, or tolerate stripes, you would hardly find them, when their discipline is completed, worth the single day's salt which they cost to his holiness, if that be his title. I must tell you, moreover, valorous sir, that the Varangians will little thank their leader, who heard them called marauders, drunkards, and what not, and repelled not the charge on the spot."

"Now, if I knew not the humours of my barbarians," thought Tatius, in his own mind, "I should bring on myself a quarrel with these untamed islanders, who the Emperor thinks can be so easily kept in discipline. But I will settle this sport presently." Accordingly, he addressed the Saxon in a soothing tone.

"My faithful soldier," he proceeded aloud, "we Romans, according to the custom of our ancestors, set as much glory on actually telling the truth, as you do in resenting the imputation of falsehood; and I could not with honour return a charge of falsehood upon Nicanor, since what he said was substantially true."

"What! that we Varangians were plunderers, drunkards, and the like?" said Hereward, more impatient than before.

"No, surely, not in that broad sense," said Achilles; "but there was too much foundation for the legend."

"When and where?" asked the Anglo-Saxon.

"You remember," replied his leader, "the long march near Laodicea, where the Varangians beat off a cloud of Turks, and retook a train of the im-

perial baggage? You know what was done that day—how you quenched your thirst, I mean?"

"I have some reason to remember it," said Hereward of Hampton; "for we were half choked with dust, fatigue, and, which was worst of all, constantly fighting with our faces to the rear, when we found some firkins of wine in certain carriages which were broken down—down our throats it went, as if it had been the best ale in Southampton."

"Ah, unhappy!" said the Follower; "saw you not that the firkins were stamped with the thrice excellent Grand Butler's own inviolable seal, and set apart for the private use of his Imperial Majesty's most sacred lips?"

"By good Saint George of merry England, worth a dozen of your Saint George of Cappadocia, I neither thought nor cared about the matter," answered Hereward. "And I know your Valour drank a mighty draught yourself out of my headpiece; not this silver bauble, but my steel-cap, which is twice as ample. By the same token, that whereas before you were giving orders to fall back, you were a changed man when you had cleared your throat of the dust, and cried, 'Bide the other brunt, my brave and stout boys of Britain!'"

"Ay," said Achilles, "I know I am but too apt to be venturous in action. But you mistake, good Hereward; the wine I tasted in the extremity of martial fatigue, was not that set apart for his sacred Majesty's own peculiar mouth, but a secondary sort, preserved for the Grand Butler himself, of which, as one of the great officers of the household, I

might right lawfully partake—the chance was nevertheless sinfully unhappy."

"On my life," replied Hereward, "I cannot see the infelicity of drinking, when we are dying of thirst."

"But, cheer up, my noble comrade," said Achilles, after he had hurried over his own exculpation, and without noticing the Varangian's light estimation of the crime, "his Imperial Majesty, in his ineffable graciousness, imputes these ill-advised draughts as a crime to no one who partook of them. He rebuked the Protospathaire for fishing up this accusation, and said, when he had recalled the bustle and confusion of that toilsome day, 'I thought myself well off amid that seven times heated furnace, when we obtained a draught of the barley-wine drank by my poor Varangians; and I drank their health, as well I might, since, had it not been for their services, I had drunk my last; and well fare their hearts, though they quaffed my wine in return!' And with that he turned off, as one who said, 'I have too much of this, being a finding of matter and ripping up of stories against Achilles Tatius and his gallant Varangians.'"

"Now, may God bless his honest heart for it!" said Hereward, with more downright heartiness than formal respect. "I'll drink to his health in what I put next to my lips that quenches thirst, whether it may be ale, wine, or ditch-water."

"Why, well said, but speak not above thy breath! and remember to put thy hand to thy forehead, when naming, or even thinking of the

Emperor!—Well, thou knowest, Hereward, that having thus obtained the advantage, I knew that the moment of a repulsed attack is always that of a successful charge; and so I brought against the Protospathaire, Nicanor, the robberies which have been committed at the Golden Gate, and other entrances of the city, where a merchant was but of late kidnapped and murdered, having on him certain jewels, the property of the Patriarch."

"Ay! indeed?" said the Varangian; "and what said Alex—— I mean the most sacred Emperor, when he heard such things said of the city warders?—though he had himself given, as we say in our land, the fox the geese to keep."

"It may be he did," replied Achilles; "but he is a sovereign of deep policy, and was resolved not to proceed against these treacherous warders, or their general, the Protospathaire, without decisive proof. His sacred Majesty, therefore, charged me to obtain specific circumstantial proof by thy means."

"And that I would have managed in two minutes, had you not called me off the chase of yon cut-throat vagabond. But his grace knows the word of a Varangian, and I can assure him that either lucre of my silver gaberdine, which they nickname a cuirass, or the hatred of my corps, would be sufficient to incite any of these knaves to cut the throat of a Varangian, who appeared to be asleep.—So we go, I suppose, captain, to bear evidence before the Emperor to this night's work?"

"No, my active soldier, hadst thou taken the runaway villain, my first act must have been to

set him free again; and my present charge to you is, to forget that such an adventure has ever taken place."

"Ha!" said the Varangian; "this is a change of policy indeed!"

"Why, yes, brave Hereward; ere I left the palace this night, the Patriarch made overtures of reconciliation betwixt me and the Protospathaire, which, as our agreement is of much consequence to the state, I could not very well reject, either as a good soldier or a good Christian. All offences to my honour are to be in the fullest degree repaid, for which the Patriarch interposes his warrant. The Emperor, who will rather wink hard than see disagreements, loves better the matter should be slurred over thus."

"And the reproaches upon the Varangians," said Hereward——

"Shall be fully retracted and atoned for," answered Achilles; "and a weighty donative in gold dealt among the corps of the Anglo-Danish axemen. Thou, my Hereward, mayst be distributor; and thus, if well-managed, mayst plate thy battle-axe with gold."

"I love my axe better as it is," said the Varangian. "My father bore it against the robber Normans at Hastings. Steel instead of gold for my money."

"Thou mayst make thy choice, Hereward," answered his officer; "only, if thou art poor, say the fault was thine own."

But here, in the course of their circuit round

Constantinople, the officer and his soldier came to a very small wicket or sallyport, opening on the interior of a large and massive advanced work, which terminated an entrance to the city itself. Here the officer halted, and made his obedience, as a devotee who is about to enter a chapel of peculiar sanctity.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II.

Note I., p. 15.—Constantinople.

The impression which the imperial city was calculated to make on such visitors as the Crusaders of the West, is given by the ancient French chronicler Villehardouin, who was present at the capture of A. D. 1203. "When we had come," he says, "within three leagues, to a certain Abbey, then we could plainly survey Constantinople. There the ships and the galleys came to anchor; and much did they who had never been in that quarter before, gaze upon the city. That such a city could be in the world they had never conceived, and they were never weary of staring at the high walls and towers with which it was entirely encompassed, the rich palaces and lofty churches, of which there were so many that no one could have believed it, if he had not seen with his own eyes that city, the Queen of all cities. And know that there was not so bold a heart there, that it did not feel some terror at the strength of Constantinople."—Chap. 66.

Again,—"And now many of those of the host went to see Constantinople within, and the rich palaces and stately churches of which it possesses so many, and the riches of the place, which are such as no other city ever equalled. I need not speak of the sanctuaries, which are as many as are in all the world beside."—Chap. 100.

Note II., p. 23.—Varangians.

Villehardouin, in describing the siege of Constantinople, A. D. 1203, says, "Li murs fu mult garnis d'Anglois et de

Danois,"—hence the dissertation of Ducange here quoted, and several articles besides in his Glossarium, as *Varangi*, Warengangi, &c. The etymology of the name is left uncertain, though the German *fort-ganger, i. e.* forth-goer, wanderer, *exile*, seems the most probable. The term occurs in various Italian and Sicilian documents, anterior to the establishment of the Varangian Guards at Constantinople, and collected by Muratori: as, for instance, in an edict of one of the Lombard kings, "Omnes Warengangi, qui de exteris finibus in regni nostri finibus advenerint, seque sub scuto potestatis nostræ subdiderint, legibus nostris Longobardorum vivere debeant,"—and in another, "De Warengangis, nobilibus, mediocribus, et rusticis hominibus, qui usque nunc in terrâ vestrâ fugiti sunt, habeatis eos."—*Muratori*, vol. ii. p. 261.

With regard to the origin of the Varangian Guard, the most distinct testimony is that of Ordericus Vitalis, who says, "When therefore the English had lost their liberty, they turned themselves with zeal to discover the means of throwing off the unaccustomed yoke. Some fled to Sueno, King of the Danes, to excite him to the recovery of the inheritance of his grandfather, Canute. Not a few fled into exile in other regions, either from the mere desire of escaping from under the Norman rule, or in the hope of acquiring wealth, and so being one day in a condition to renew the struggle at home. Some of these, in the bloom of youth, penetrated into a far distant land, and offered themselves to the military service of the Constantinopolitan Emperor—that wise prince, against whom Robert Guiscard, Duke of Apulia, had then raised all his forces. The English exiles were favourably received, and opposed in battle to the Normans, for whose encounter the Greeks themselves were too weak. Alexius began to build a town for the English, a little above Constantinople, at a place called *Chevelot*, but the trouble of the Normans from Sicily still increasing, he soon recalled them to the capital, and intrusted the principal palace with all its treasures to their keeping. This was the method in which the Saxon English found their way to Ionia, where they still remain, highly valued by the Emperor and the people."—Book IV. p. 508.

CHAPTER III.

Here, youth, thy foot unbrace,
Here, youth, thy brow unbraid,
Each tribute that may grace
The threshold here be paid.
Walk with the stealthy pace
Which Nature teaches deer,
When, echoing in the chase,
The hunter's horn they hear.
The Court.

BEFORE entering, Achilles Tatius made various gesticulations, which were imitated roughly and awkwardly by the unpractised Varangian, whose service with his corps had been almost entirely in the field, his routine of duty not having, till very lately, called him to serve as one of the garrison of Constantinople. He was not, therefore, acquainted with the minute observances which the Greeks, who were the most formal and ceremonious soldiers and courtiers in the world, rendered not merely to the Greek Emperor in person, but throughout the sphere which peculiarly partook of his influence.

Achilles, having gesticulated after his own fashion, at length touched the door with a rap, distinct at once and modest. This was thrice repeated, when the captain whispered to his attendant, "The interior!—for thy life, do as thou seest me do." At

the same moment he started back, and, stooping his head on his breast, with his hands over his eyes, as if to save them from being dazzled by an expected burst of light, awaited the answer to his summons. The Anglo-Dane, desirous to obey his leader, imitating him as near as he could, stood side by side in the posture of Oriental humiliation. The little portal opened inwards, when no burst of light was seen, but four of the Varangians were made visible in the entrance, holding each his battle-axe, as if about to strike down the intruders who had disturbed the silence of their watch.

"Acoulouthos," said the leader, by way of password.

"Tatius and Acoulouthos," murmured the warders, as a countersign.

Each sentinel sunk his weapon.

Achilles then reared his stately crest, with a conscious dignity at making this display of court influence in the eyes of his soldiers. Hereward observed an undisturbed gravity, to the surprise of his officer, who marvelled in his own mind how he could be such a barbarian as to regard with apathy a scene, which had in his eyes the most impressive and peculiar awe. This indifference he imputed to the stupid insensibility of his companion.

They passed on between the sentinels, who wheeled backward in file, on each side of the portal, and gave the strangers entrance to a long narrow plank, stretched across the city-moat, which was here drawn within the enclosure of an external ram-

part, projecting beyond the principal wall of the city.

"This," he whispered to Hereward, "is called the Bridge of Peril, and it is said that it has been occasionally smeared with oil, or strewed with dried peas, and that the bodies of men, known to have been in company with the Emperor's most sacred person, have been taken out of the Golden Horn,* into which the moat empties itself."

"I would not have thought," said the islander, raising his voice to its usual rough tone, "that Alexius Comnenus——"

"Hush, rash and regardless of your life!" said Achilles Tatius; "to awaken the daughter of the imperial arch,† is to incur deep penalty at all times; but when a rash delinquent has disturbed her with reflections on his most sacred Highness the Emperor, death is a punishment far too light for the effrontery which has interrupted her blessed slumber!—Ill hath been my fate, to have positive commands laid on me, enjoining me to bring into the sacred precincts a creature who hath no more of the salt of civilisation in him than to keep his mortal frame from corruption, since of all mental culture he is totally incapable. Consider thyself, Hereward, and bethink thee what thou art. By nature a poor barbarian—thy best boast that thou hast slain certain Mussulmans in thy sacred master's quarrel; and here art thou admitted into the invio-

* The harbour of Constantinople.

† The daughter of the arch was a courtly expression for the echo, as we find explained by the courtly commander himself.

lable enclosure of the Blaquernal, and in the hearing not only of the royal daughter of the imperial arch, which means," said the eloquent leader, "the echo of the sublime vaults; but—Heaven be our guide,—for what I know, within the natural hearing of the Sacred Ear itself!"

"Well, my captain," replied the Varangian, "I cannot presume to speak my mind after the fashion of this place; but I can easily suppose I am but ill qualified to converse in the presence of the court, nor do I mean therefore to say a word till I am spoken to, unless when I shall see no better company than ourselves. To be plain, I find difficulty in modelling my voice to a smoother tone than nature has given it. So, henceforth, my brave captain, I will be mute, unless when you give me a sign to speak."

"You will act wisely," said the captain. "Here be certain persons of high rank, nay, some that have been born in the purple itself, that will, Hereward, (alas, for thee!) prepare to sound with the line of their courtly understanding the depths of thy barbarous and shallow conceit. Do not, therefore, then, join their graceful smiles with thy inhuman bursts of cachinnation, with which thou art wont to thunder forth when opening in chorus with thy messmates."

"I tell thee I will be silent," said the Varangian, moved somewhat beyond his mood. "If you trust my word, so; if you think I am a jackdaw that must be speaking, whether in or out of place

and purpose, I am contented to go back again, and therein we can end the matter."

Achilles, conscious perhaps that it was his best policy not to drive his subaltern to extremity, lowered his tone somewhat in reply to the uncourtly note of the soldier, as if allowing something for the rude manners of one whom he considered as not easily matched among the Varangians themselves, for strength and valour; qualities which, in despite of Hereward's discourtesy, Achilles suspected in his heart were fully more valuable than all those nameless graces which a more courtly and accomplished soldier might possess.

The expert navigator of the intricacies of the imperial residence, carried the Varangian through two or three small complicated courts, forming a part of the extensive Palace of the Blaquernal,* and entered the building itself by a side-door—watched in like manner by a sentinel of the Varangian Guard, whom they passed on being recognised. In the next apartment was stationed the Court of Guard, where were certain soldiers of the same corps amusing themselves at games somewhat resembling the modern draughts and dice, while they seasoned their pastime with frequent applications to deep flagons of ale, which were furnished to them while passing away their hours of duty. Some glances passed between Hereward and his comrades, and he would have joined them, or at

* This palace derived its name from the neighbouring *Blachernian* Gate and Bridge.

least spoke to them; for, since the adventure of the Mitylenian, Hereward had rather thought himsels annoyed than distinguished by his moonlight ramble in the company of his commander, excepting always the short and interesting period during which he conceived they were on the way to fight a duel. Still, however negligent in the strict observance of the ceremonies of the sacred palace, the Varangians had, in their own way, rigid notions of calculating their military duty; in consequence of which Hereward, without speaking to his companions, followed his leader through the guard-room, and one or two antechambers adjacent, the splendid and luxurious furniture of which convinced him that he could be nowhere else save in the sacred residence of his master the Emperor.

At length, having traversed passages and apartments with which the captain seemed familiar, and which he threaded with a stealthy, silent, and apparently a reverential pace, as if, in his own inflated phrase, afraid to awaken the sounding echoes of those lofty and monumental halls, another species of inhabitants began to be visible. In different entrances, and in different apartments, the northern soldier beheld those unfortunate slaves, chiefly of African descent, raised occasionally under the Emperors of Greece to great power and honours, who, in that respect, imitated one of the most barbarous points of Oriental despotism. These slaves were differently occupied; some standing, as if on guard, at gates or in passages, with their drawn sabres in their hands; some were sitting in the Oriental

fashion, on carpets, reposing themselves, or playing at various games, all of a character profoundly silent. Not a word passed between the guide of Hereward, and the withered and deformed beings whom they thus encountered. The exchange of a glance with the principal soldier seemed all that was necessary to ensure both an uninterrupted passage.

After making their way through several apartments, empty or thus occupied, they at length entered one of black marble, or some other dark-coloured stone, much loftier and longer than the rest. Side passages opened into it, so far as the islander could discern, descending from several portals in the wall; but as the oils and gums with which the lamps in these passages were fed diffused a dim vapour around, it was difficult to ascertain, from the imperfect light, either the shape of the hall, or the style of its architecture. At the upper and lower ends of the chamber, there was a stronger and clearer light. It was when they were in the middle of this huge and long apartment, that Achilles said to the soldier, in the sort of cautionary whisper which he appeared to have substituted in place of his natural voice since he had crossed the Bridge of Peril—

"Remain here till I return, and stir from this hall on no account."

"To hear is to obey," answered the Varangian, an expression of obedience, which, like many other phrases and fashions, the empire, which still affected the name of Roman, had borrowed from the

barbarians of the East. Achilles Tatius then hastened up the steps which led to one of the side-doors of the hall, which being slightly pressed, its noiseless hinge gave way and admitted him.

Left alone to amuse himself as he best could, within the limits permitted to him, the Varangian visited in succession both ends of the hall, where the objects were more visible than elsewhere. The lower end had in its centre a small lowbrowed door of iron. Over it was displayed the Greek crucifix in bronze, and around and on every side, the representation of shackles, fetter-bolts, and the like, were also executed in bronze, and disposed as appropriate ornaments over the entrance. The door of the dark archway was half open, and Hereward naturally looked in, the orders of his chief not prohibiting his satisfying his curiosity thus far. A dense red light, more like a distant spark than a lamp, affixed to the wall of what seemed a very narrow and winding stair, resembling in shape and size a draw-well, the verge of which opened on the threshold of the iron door, showed a descent which seemed to conduct to the infernal regions. The Varangian, however obtuse he might be considered by the quick-witted Greeks, had no difficulty in comprehending that a staircase having such a gloomy appearance, and the access to which was by a portal decorated in such a melancholy style of architecture, could only lead to the dungeons of the imperial palace, the size and complicated number of which were neither the least remarkable, nor the least awe-im-

posing portion of the sacred edifice. Listening profoundly, he even thought he caught such accents as befit those graves of living men, the faint echoing of groans and sighs, sounding as it were from the deep abyss beneath. But in this respect his fancy probably filled up the sketch which his conjectures bodied out.

"I have done nothing," he thought, "to merit being immured in one of these subterranean dens. Surely, though my captain, Achilles Tatius, is, under favour, little better than an ass, he cannot be so false of word as to train me to prison under false pretexts? I trow he shall first see for the last time how the English axe plays, if such is to be the sport of the evening. But let us see the upper end of this enormous vault; it may bear a better omen."

Thus thinking, and not quite ruling the tramp of his armed footstep according to the ceremonies of the place, the large-limbed Saxon strode to the upper end of the black marble hall. The ornament of the portal here was a small altar, like those in the temples of the heathen deities, which projected above the centre of the arch. On this altar smoked incense of some sort, the fumes of which rose curling in a thin cloud to the roof, and thence extending through the hall, enveloped in its column of smoke a singular emblem, of which the Varangian could make nothing. It was the representation of two human arms and hands, seeming to issue from the wall, having the palms extended and open, as about to confer some boon on those who approach-

ed the altar. These arms were formed of bronze, and being placed farther back than the altar with its incense, were seen through the curling smoke by lamps so disposed as to illuminate the whole archway. "The meaning of this," thought the simple barbarian, "I should well know how to explain, were these fists clenched, and were the hall dedicated to the *pancration*, which we call boxing; but as even these helpless Greeks use not their hands without their fingers being closed, by St George, I can make out nothing of their meaning."

At this instant Achilles entered the black marble hall at the same door by which he had left it, and came up to his neophyte, as the Varangian might be termed.

"Come with me now, Hereward, for here approaches the thick of the onset. Now display the utmost courage that thou canst summon up, for believe me, thy credit and name also depend on it."

"Fear nothing for either," said Hereward, "if the heart or hand of one man can bear him through the adventure by the help of a toy like this."

"Keep thy voice low and submissive, I have told thee a score of times," said the leader, "and lower thine axe, which, as I bethink me, thou hadst better leave in the outer apartment."

"With your leave, noble captain," replied Hereward, "I am unwilling to lay aside my bread-winner. I am one of those awkward clowns who cannot behave seemly unless I have something to occupy my hands, and my faithful battle-axe comes most natural to me."

"Keep it then; but remember thou dash it not about according to thy custom, nor bellow, nor shout, nor cry as in a battle-field; think of the sacred character of the place, which exaggerates riot into blasphemy, and remember the persons whom thou mayst chance to see, an offence to some of whom, it may be, ranks in the same sense with blasphemy against Heaven itself."

This lecture carried the tutor and the pupil so far as to the side-door, and thence inducted them into a species of anteroom, from which Achilles led his Varangian forward, until a pair of folding-doors, opening into what proved to be a principal apartment of the palace, exhibited to the rough-hewn native of the north a sight equally new and surprising.

It was an apartment of the palace of the Blaquernal, dedicated to the special service of the beloved daughter of the Emperor Alexius, the Princess Anna Comnena, known to our times by her literary talents, which record the history of her father's reign. She was seated, the queen and sovereign of a literary circle, such as an imperial Princess, porphyrogenita, or born in the sacred purple chamber itself, could assemble in those days, and a glance around will enable us to form an idea of her guests, or companions.

The literary Princess herself had the bright eyes, straight features, and comely and pleasing manners, which all would have allowed to the Emperor's daughter, even if she could not have been, with severe truth, said to have possessed them.

She was placed upon a small bench, or sofa, the fair sex here not being permitted to recline, as was the fashion of the Roman ladies. A table before her was loaded with books, plants, herbs, and drawings. She sat on a slight elevation, and those who enjoyed the intimacy of the Princess, or to whom she wished to speak in particular, were allowed, during such sublime colloquy, to rest their knees on the little dais, or elevated place where her chair found its station, in a posture half standing, half kneeling. Three other seats, of different heights, were placed on the dais, and under the same canopy of state which overshadowed that of the Princess Anna.

The first, which strictly resembled her own chair in size and convenience, was one designed for her husband, Nicephorus Briennius. He was said to entertain or affect the greatest respect for his wife's erudition, though the courtiers were of opinion he would have liked to absent himself from her evening parties more frequently than was particularly agreeable to the Princess Anna and her imperial parents. This was partly explained by the private tattle of the court, which averred that the Princess Anna Comnena had been more beautiful when she was less learned; and that, though still a fine woman, she had somewhat lost the charms of her person as she became enriched in her mind.

To atone for the lowly fashion of the seat of Nicephorus Briennius, it was placed as near to his princess as it could possibly be edged by the ushers, so that she might not lose one look of her handsome

spouse, nor he the least particle of wisdom which might drop from the lips of his erudite consort.

Two other seats of honour, or rather thrones,—for they had footstools placed for the support of the feet, rests for the arms, and embroidered pillows for the comfort of the back, not to mention the glories of the outspreading canopy,—were destined for the imperial couple, who frequently attended their daughter's studies, which she prosecuted in public in the way we have intimated. On such occasions, the Empress Irene enjoyed the triumph peculiar to the mother of an accomplished daughter, while Alexius, as it might happen, sometimes listened with complacence to the rehearsal of his own exploits in the inflated language of the Princess, and sometimes mildly nodded over her dialogues upon the mysteries of philosophy, with the Patriarch Zosimus, and other sages.

All these four distinguished seats for the persons of the Imperial family, were occupied at the moment which we have described, excepting that which ought to have been filled by Nicephorus Briennius, the husband of the fair Anna Comnena. To his negligence and absence was perhaps owing the angry spot on the brow of his fair bride. Beside her on the platform were two white-robed nymphs of her household; female slaves, in a word, who reposed themselves on their knees on cushions, when their assistance was not wanted as a species of living book-desks, to support and extend the parchment rolls, in which the Princess recorded her own wisdom, or from which she quoted that of

others. One of these young maidens, called Astarte, was so distinguished as a calligrapher, or beautiful writer of various alphabets and languages, that she narrowly escaped being sent as a present to the Caliph, (who could neither read nor write,) at a time when it was necessary to bribe him into peace. Violante, usually called the Muse, the other attendant of the Princess, a mistress of the vocal and instrumental art of music, was actually sent in a compliment to soothe the temper of Robert Guiscard, the Archduke of Apulia, who being aged and stone-deaf, and the girl under ten years old at the time, returned the valued present to the imperial donor, and, with the selfishness which was one of that wily Norman's characteristics, desired to have some one sent him who could contribute to his pleasure, instead of a twangling squalling infant.

Beneath these elevated seats there sat, or reposed on the floor of the hall, such favourites as were admitted. The patriarch Zosimus, and one or two old men, were permitted the use of certain lowly stools, which were the only seats prepared for the learned members of the Princess's evening parties, as they would have been called in our days. As for the younger magnates, the honour of being permitted to join the imperial conversation was expected to render them far superior to the paltry accommodation of a joint stool. Five or six courtiers, of different dress and ages, might compose the party, who either stood, or relieved their posture by kneeling, along the verge of an adorned fountain, which shed a mist of such very small

rain as to dispel almost insensibly, cooling the fragrant breeze which breathed from the flowers and shrubs, that were so disposed as to send a waste of sweets around. One goodly old man, named Michael Agelastes, big, burly, and dressed like an ancient Cynic philosopher, was distinguished by assuming, in a great measure, the ragged garb and mad bearing of that sect, and by his inflexible practice of the strictest ceremonies exigible by the Imperial family. He was known by an affectation of cynical principle and language, and of republican philosophy, strangely contradicted by his practical deference to the great. It was wonderful how long this man, now sixty years old and upwards, disdained to avail himself of the accustomed privilege of leaning, or supporting his limbs, and with what regularity he maintained either the standing posture or that of absolute kneeling; but the first was so much his usual attitude, that he acquired among his court friends the name of Elephas, or the Elephant, because the ancients had an idea that the half-reasoning animal, as it is called, has joints incapable of kneeling down.

"Yet I have seen them kneel when I was in the country of the Gymnosophists," said a person present on the evening of Hereward's introduction.

"To take up their master on their shoulders? so will ours," said the Patriarch Zosimus, with the slight sneer which was the nearest advance to a sarcasm that the etiquette of the Greek court permitted; for on all ordinary occasions, it would not have offended the Presence more surely, literally

to have drawn a poniard, than to exchange a repartee in the imperial circle. Even the sarcasm, such as it was, would have been thought censurable by that ceremonious court in any but the Patriarch, to whose high rank some license was allowed.

Just as he had thus far offended decorum, Achilles Tatius, and his soldier Hereward, entered the apartment. The former bore him with even more than his usual degree of courtliness, as if to set his own good-breeding off by a comparison with the inexpert bearing of his follower; while, nevertheless, he had a secret pride in exhibiting, as one under his own immediate and distinct command, a man whom he was accustomed to consider as one of the finest soldiers in the army of Alexius, whether appearance or reality were to be considered.

Some astonishment followed the abrupt entrance of the new comers. Achilles indeed glided into the presence with the easy and quiet extremity of respect which intimated his habitude in these regions. But Hereward started on his entrance, and perceiving himself in company of the court, hastily strove to remedy his disorder. His commander, throwing round a scarce visible shrug of apology, made then a confidential and monitory sign to Hereward to mind his conduct. What he meant was, that he should doff his helmet and fall prostrate on the ground. But the Anglo-Saxon, unaccustomed to interpret obscure inferences, naturally thought of his military duties, and advanced in front of the Emperor, as when he rendered his

military homage. He made reverence with his knee, half touched his cap, and then recovering and shouldering his axe, stood in advance of the imperial chair, as if on duty as a sentinel.

A gentle smile of surprise went round the circle as they gazed on the manly appearance, and somewhat unceremonious but martial deportment of the northern soldier. The various spectators around consulted the Emperor's face, not knowing whether they were to take the intrusive manner of the Varangian's entrance as matter of ill-breeding, and manifest their horror, or whether they ought rather to consider the bearing of the life-guardsman as indicating blunt and manly zeal, and therefore to be received with applause.

It was some little time ere the Emperor recovered himself sufficiently to strike a key-note, as was usual upon such occasions. Alexius Comnenus had been wrapt for a moment into some species of slumber, or at least absence of mind. Out of this he had been startled by the sudden appearance of the Varangian; for though he was accustomed to commit the outer guards of the palace to this trusty corps, yet the deformed blacks whom we have mentioned, and who sometimes rose to be ministers of state and commanders of armies, were, on all ordinary occasions, intrusted with the guard of the interior of the palace. Alexius, therefore, awakened from his slumber, and the military phrase of his daughter still ringing in his ears as she was reading a description of the great historical work, in which she had detailed the conflicts of

his reign, felt somewhat unprepared for the entrance and military deportment of one of the Saxon guard, with whom he was accustomed to associate, in general, scenes of blows, danger, and death.

After a troubled glance around, his look rested on Achilles Tatius. "Why here," he said, "trusty Follower? why this soldier here at this time of night?" Here, of course, was the moment for modelling the visages, *regis ad exemplum;* but, ere the Patriarch could frame his countenance into devout apprehension of danger, Achilles Tatius had spoken a word or two, which reminded Alexius' memory that the soldier had been brought there by his own special orders. "Oh, ay! true, good fellow," said he, smoothing his troubled brow; "we had forgot that passage among the cares of state." He then spoke to the Varangian with a countenance more frank, and a heartier accent, than he used to his courtiers; for, to a despotic monarch, a faithful life-guardsman is a person of confidence, while an officer of high rank is always in some degree a subject of distrust. "Ha!" said he, "our worthy Anglo-Dane, how fares he?" This unceremonious salutation surprised all but him to whom it was addressed. Hereward answered, accompanying his words with a military obeisance which partook of heartiness rather than reverence, with a loud unsubdued voice, which startled the presence still more that the language was Saxon, which these foreigners occasionally used, "*Waes hael, Kaisar mirrig und machtigh!*"—that is, Be of good health, stout and mighty Emperor. The Em-

peror, with a smile of intelligence, to show he could speak to his guards in their own foreign language, replied, by the well-known counter-signal—"*Drink hael!*"

Immediately a page brought a silver goblet of wine. The Emperor put his lips to it, though he scarce tasted the liquor, then commanded it to be handed to Hereward, and bade the soldier drink. The Saxon did not wait till he was desired a second time, but took off the contents without hesitation. A gentle smile, decorous as the presence required, passed over the assembly, at a feat which, though by no means wonderful in a hyperborean, seemed prodigious in the estimation of the moderate Greeks. Alexius himself laughed more loudly than his courtiers thought might be becoming on their part, and mustering what few words of Varangian he possessed, which he eked out with Greek, demanded of his life-guardsman—"Well, my bold Briton, or Edward, as men call thee, dost thou know the flavour of that wine?"

"Yes," answered the Varangian, without change of countenance, "I tasted it once before at Laodicea"——

Here his officer, Achilles Tatius, became sensible that his soldier approached delicate ground, and in vain endeavoured to gain his attention, in order that he might furtively convey to him a hint to be silent, or at least take heed what he said in such a presence. But the soldier, who, with proper military observance, continued to have his eye and attention fixed on the Emperor, as the prince

whom he was bound to answer or to serve, saw none of the hints, which Achilles at length suffered to become so broad, that Zosimus and the Protospathaire exchanged expressive glances, as calling on each other to notice the by-play of the leader of the Varangians.

In the meanwhile, the dialogue between the Emperor and his soldier continued:—"How," said Alexius, "did this draught relish, compared with the former?"

"There is fairer company here, my liege, than that of the Arabian archers," answered Hereward, with a look and bow of instinctive good-breeding; "Nevertheless, there lacks the flavour which the heat of the sun, the dust of the combat, with the fatigue of wielding such a weapon as this" (advancing his axe) "for eight hours together, give to a cup of rare wine."

"Another deficiency there might be," said Agelastes the Elephant, "provided I am pardoned hinting at it," he added, with a look to the throne,—"it might be the smaller size of the cup compared with that at Laodicea."

"By Taranis, you say true," answered the life-guardsman; "at Laodicea I used my helmet."

"Let us see the cups compared together, good friend," said Agelastes, continuing his raillery, "that we may be sure thou hast not swallowed the present goblet; for I thought, from the manner of the draught, there was a chance of its going down with its contents."

"There are some things which I do not easily

swallow," answered the Varangian, in a calm and indifferent tone; "but they must come from a younger and more active man than you."

The company again smiled to each other, as if to hint that the philosopher, though also parcel wit by profession, had the worst of the encounter.

The Emperor at the same time interfered—"Nor did I send for thee hither, good fellow, to be baited by idle taunts."

Here Agelastes shrunk back in the circle, as a hound that has been rebuked by the huntsman for babbling—and the Princess Anna Comnena, who had indicated by her fair features a certain degree of impatience, at length spoke—"Will it then please you, my imperial and much-beloved father, to inform those blessed with admission to the Muses' temple, for what it is that you have ordered this soldier to be this night admitted to a place so far above his rank in life? Permit me to say, we ought not to waste, in frivolous and silly jests, the time which is sacred to the welfare of the empire, as every moment of your leisure must be."

"Our daughter speaks wisely," said the Empress Irene, who, like most mothers who do not possess much talent themselves, and are not very capable of estimating it in others, was, nevertheless, a great admirer of her favourite daughter's accomplishments, and ready to draw them out on all occasions. "Permit me to remark, that in this divine and selected palace of the Muses, dedicated to the studies of our well-beloved and highly-gifted daughter, whose pen will preserve your reputa-

tion, our most imperial husband, till the desolation of the universe, and which enlivens and delights this society, the very flower of the wits of our sublime court;—permit me to say, that we have, merely by admitting a single life-guardsman, given our conversation the character of that which distinguishes a barrack."

Now the Emperor Alexius Comnenus had the same feeling with many an honest man in ordinary life when his wife begins a long oration, especially as the Empress Irene did not always retain the observance consistent with his awful rule and right supremacy, although especially severe in exacting it from all others, in reference to her lord. Therefore, though he had felt some pleasure in gaining a short release from the monotonous recitation of the Princess's history, he now saw the necessity of resuming it, or of listening to the matrimonial eloquence of the Empress. He sighed, therefore, as he said, "I crave your pardon, good our imperial spouse, and our daughter born in the purple chamber. I remember me, our most amiable and accomplished daughter, that last night you wished to know the particulars of the battle of Laodicea, with the heathenish Arabs, whom Heaven confound. And for certain considerations which moved ourselves to add other enquiries to our own recollection, Achilles Tatius, our most trusty Follower, was commissioned to introduce into this place one of those soldiers under his command, being such a one whose courage and presence of mind could best enable him to remark what passed around him on

that remarkable and bloody day. And this I suppose to be the man brought to us for that purpose."

"If I am permitted to speak, and live," answered the Follower, "your Imperial Highness, with those divine Princesses, whose name is to us as those of blessed saints, have in your presence the flower of my Anglo-Danes, or whatsoever unbaptized name is given to my soldiers. He is, as I may say, a barbarian of barbarians; for although in birth and breeding unfit to soil with his feet the carpet of this precinct of accomplishment and eloquence, he is so brave—so trusty—so devotedly attached—and so unhesitatingly zealous, that"——

"Enough, good Follower," said the Emperor; "let us only know that he is cool and observant, not confused and fluttered during close battle, as we have sometimes observed in you and other great commanders—and, to speak truth, have even felt in our imperial self on extraordinary occasions. Which difference in man's constitution is not owing to any inferiority of courage, but, in us, to a certain consciousness of the importance of our own safety to the welfare of the whole, and to a feeling of the number of duties which at once devolve on us. Speak then, and speak quickly, Tatius; for I discern that our dearest consort, and our thrice fortunate daughter born in the imperial chamber of purple, seem to wax somewhat impatient."

"Hereward," answered Tatius, "is as composed and observant in battle, as another in a festive dance. The dust of war is the breath of his nostrils; and he will prove his worth in combat against

any four others, (Varangians excepted,) who shall term themselves your Imperial Highness's bravest servants."

"Follower," said the Emperor with a displeased look and tone, "instead of instructing these poor, ignorant barbarians in the rules and civilisation of our enlightened empire, you foster, by such boastful words, the idle pride and fury of their temper, which hurries them into brawls with the legions of other foreign countries, and even breeds quarrels among themselves."

"If my mouth may be opened in the way of most humble excuse," said the Follower, "I would presume to reply, that I but an hour hence talked with this poor ignorant Anglo-Dane, on the paternal care with which the Imperial Majesty of Greece regards the preservation of that concord which unites the followers of his standard, and how desirous he is to promote that harmony, more especially amongst the various nations who have the happiness to serve you, in spite of the bloodthirsty quarrels of the Franks, and other northern men, who are never free from civil broil. I think the poor youth's understanding can bear witness to this much in my behalf." He then looked towards Hereward, who gravely inclined his head in token of assent to what his captain said. His excuse thus ratified, Achilles proceeded in his apology more firmly. "What I have said even now was spoken without consideration; for, instead of pretending that this Hereward would face four of

your Imperial Highness's servants, I ought to have said, that he was willing to defy six of your Imperial Majesty's most deadly *enemies*, and permit them to choose every circumstance of time, arms, and place of combat."

"That hath a better sound," said the Emperor; "and in truth, for the information of my dearest daughter, who piously has undertaken to record the things which I have been the blessed means of doing for the empire, I earnestly wish that she should remember, that though the sword of Alexius hath not slept in its sheath, yet he hath never sought his own aggrandizement of fame at the price of bloodshed among his subjects."

"I trust," said Anna Comnena, "that in my humble sketch of the life of the princely sire from whom I derive my existence, I have not forgot to notice his love of peace, and care for the lives of his soldiery, and abhorrence of the bloody manners of the heretic Franks, as one of his most distinguishing characteristics."

Assuming then an attitude more commanding, as one who was about to claim the attention of the company, the Princess inclined her head gently around to the audience, and taking a roll of parchment from the fair amanuensis, which she had, in a most beautiful handwriting, engrossed to her mistress's dictation, Anna Comnena prepared to read its contents.

At this moment, the eyes of the Princess rested for an instant on the barbarian Hereward, to whom she deigned this greeting—"Valiant barbarian, of

whom my fancy recalls some memory, as if in a dream, thou art now to hear a work, which, if the author be put into comparison with the subject, might be likened to a portrait of Alexander, in executing which, some inferior dauber has usurped the pencil of Apelles; but which essay, however it may appear unworthy of the subject in the eyes of many, must yet command some envy in those who candidly consider its contents, and the difficulty of portraying the great personage concerning whom it is written. Still, I pray thee, give thine attention to what I have now to read, since this account of the battle of Laodicea, the details thereof being principally derived from his Imperial Highness, my excellent father, from the altogether valiant Protospathaire, his invincible general, together with Achilles Tatius, the faithful Follower of our victorious Emperor, may nevertheless be in some circumstances inaccurate. For it is to be thought, that the high offices of those great commanders retained them at a distance from some particularly active parts of the fray, in order that they might have more cool and accurate opportunity to form a judgment upon the whole, and transmit their orders, without being disturbed by any thoughts of personal safety. Even so, brave barbarian, in the art of embroidery, (marvel not that we are a proficient in that mechanical process, since it is patronized by Minerva, whose studies we affect to follow,) we reserve to ourselves the superintendence of the entire web, and commit to our maidens and others the execution of particular parts.

Thus, in the same manner, thou, valiant Varangian, being engaged in the very thickest of the affray before Laodicea, mayst point out to us, the unworthy historian of so renowned a war, those chances which befell where men fought hand to hand, and where the fate of war was decided by the edge of the sword. Therefore, dread not, thou bravest of the axe-men to whom we owe that victory, and so many others, to correct any mistake or misapprehension which we may have been led into concerning the details of that glorious event."

"Madam," said the Varangian, "I shall attend with diligence to what your Highness may be pleased to read to me; although, as to presuming to blame the history of a Princess born in the purple, far be such a presumption from me; still less would it become a barbaric Varangian to pass a judgment on the military conduct of the Emperor, by whom he is liberally paid, or of the commander, by whom he is well treated. Before an action, if our advice is required, it is ever faithfully tendered; but according to my rough wit, our censure after the field is fought would be more invidious than useful. Touching the Protospathaire, if it be the duty of a general to absent himself from close action, I can safely say, or swear, were it necessary, that the invincible commander was never seen by me within a javelin's cast of aught that looked like danger."

This speech, boldly and bluntly delivered, had a general effect on the company present. The Emperor himself, and Achilles Tatius, looked like men who had got off from a danger better than they ex-

pected. The Protospathaire laboured to conceal a movement of resentment. Agelastes whispered to the Patriarch, near whom he was placed, "The northern battle-axe lacks neither point nor edge."

"Hush!" said Zosimus, "let us hear how this is to end; the Princess is about to speak."

CHAPTER IV.

We heard the Tecbir, so these Arabs call
Their shout of onset, when with loud acclaim
They challenged Heaven, as if demanding conquest.
The battle join'd, and, through the barb'rous herd,
Fight, fight! and Paradise! was all their cry.
The Siege of Damascus.

THE voice of the northern soldier, although modified by feelings of respect to the Emperor, and even attachment to his captain, had more of a tone of blunt sincerity, nevertheless, than was usually heard by the sacred echoes of the imperial palace; and though the Princess Anna Comnena began to think that she had invoked the opinion of a severe judge, she was sensible, at the same time, by the deference of his manner, that his respect was of a character more real, and his applause, should she gain it, would prove more truly flattering, than the gilded assent of the whole court of her father. She gazed with some surprise and attention on Hereward, already described as a very handsome young man, and felt the natural desire to please, which is easily created in the mind towards a fine person of the other sex. His attitude

was easy and bold, but neither clownish nor uncourtly. His title of a barbarian, placed him at once free from the forms of civilized life, and the rules of artificial politeness. But his character for valour, and the noble self-confidence of his bearing, gave him a deeper interest than would have been acquired by a more studied and anxious address, or an excess of reverential awe.

In short, the Princess Anna Comnena, high in rank as she was, and born in the imperial purple, which she herself deemed the first of all attributes, felt herself, nevertheless, in preparing to resume the recitation of her history, more anxious to obtain the approbation of this rude soldier, than that of all the rest of the courteous audience. She knew them well, it is true, and felt nowise solicitous about the applause which the daughter of the Emperor was sure to receive with full hands from those of the Grecian court to whom she might choose to communicate the productions of her father's daughter. But she had now a judge of a new character, whose applause, if bestowed, must have something in it intrinsically real, since it could only be obtained by affecting his head or his heart.

It was perhaps under the influence of these feelings, that the Princess was somewhat longer than usual in finding out the passage in the roll of history at which she purposed to commence. It was also noticed, that she began her recitation with a diffidence and embarrassment surprising to the noble hearers, who had often seen her in full possession of her presence of mind before what they

conceived a more distinguished, and even more critical audience.

Neither were the circumstances of the Varangian such as rendered the scene indifferent to him. Anna Comnena had indeed attained her fifth lustre, and that is a period after which Grecian beauty is understood to commence its decline. How long she had passed that critical period, was a secret to all but the trusted ward-women of the purple chamber. Enough, that it was affirmed by the popular tongue, and seemed to be attested by that bent towards philosophy and literature, which is not supposed to be congenial to beauty in its earlier buds, to amount to one or two years more. She might be seven-and-twenty.

Still Anna Comnena was, or had very lately been, a beauty of the very first rank, and must be supposed to have still retained charms to captivate a barbarian of the north; if, indeed, he himself was not careful to maintain an heedful recollection of the immeasurable distance between them. Indeed, even this recollection might hardly have saved Hereward from the charms of this enchantress, bold, free-born, and fearless as he was; for, during that time of strange revolutions, there were many instances of successful generals sharing the couch of imperial princesses, whom perhaps they had themselves rendered widows, in order to make way for their own pretensions. But, besides the influence of other recollections, which the reader may learn hereafter, Hereward, though flattered by the unusual degree of attention which the

Princess bestowed upon him, saw in her only the daughter of his Emperor and adopted liege lord, and the wife of a noble prince, whom reason and duty alike forbade him to think of in any other light.

It was after one or two preliminary efforts that the Princess Anna began her reading, with an uncertain voice, which gained strength and fortitude as she proceeded with the following passage from a well-known part of her history of Alexius Comnenus, but which unfortunately has not been republished in the Byzantine historians. The narrative cannot, therefore, be otherwise than acceptable to the antiquarian reader; and the author hopes to receive the thanks of the learned world for the recovery of a curious fragment, which, without his exertions, must probably have passed to the gulf of total oblivion.

The Retreat of Laodicea,

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED FROM THE GREEK OF THE PRINCESS COMNENA'S HISTORY OF HER FATHER.

"The sun had betaken himself to his bed in the ocean, ashamed, it would seem, to see the immortal army of our most sacred Emperor Alexius surrounded by those barbarous hordes of unbelieving barbarians, who, as described in our last chapter, had occupied the various passes both in front and rear of the Romans,* secured during the preceding night by the wily barbarians. Although, therefore, a triumphant course of advance had brought us to this point, it now became a serious and doubtful question whether our victorious eagles might be able to penetrate any farther into the country of the enemy, or even to retreat with safety into their own.

"The extensive acquaintance of the Emperor with military affairs, in which he exceeds most living princes, had induced him, on the preceding evening, to ascertain, with marvellous exactitude and foresight, the precise position of the enemy. In this most necessary service he employed certain light-armed barbarians, whose habits and discipline

* More properly termed the Greeks; but we follow the phraseology of the fair authoress.

had been originally derived from the wilds of Syria; and, if I am required to speak according to the dictation of Truth, seeing she ought always to sit upon the pen of a historian, I must needs say they were infidels like their enemies; faithfully attached, however, to the Roman service, and, as I believe, true slaves of the Emperor, to whom they communicated the information required by him respecting the position of his dreaded opponent Jezdegerd. These men did not bring in their information till long after the hour when the Emperor usually betook himself to rest.

"Notwithstanding this derangement of his most sacred time, our imperial father, who had postponed the ceremony of disrobing, so important were the necessities of the moment, continued, until deep in the night, to hold a council of his wisest chiefs, men whose depth of judgment might have saved a sinking world, and who now consulted what was to be done under the pressure of the circumstances in which they were now placed. And so great was the urgency, that all ordinary observances of the household were set aside, since I have heard from those who witnessed the fact, that the royal bed was displayed in the very room where the council assembled, and that the sacred lamp, called the Light of the Council, and which always burns when the Emperor presides in person over the deliberations of his servants, was for that night—a thing unknown in our annals—fed with unperfumed oil!!"

The fair speaker here threw her fine form into

an attitude which expressed holy horror, and the hearers intimated their sympathy in the exciting cause by corresponding signs of interest; as to which we need only say, that the sigh of Achilles Tatius was the most pathetic; while the groan of Agelastes the Elephant was deepest and most tremendously bestial in its sound. Hereward seemed little moved, except by a slight motion of surprise at the wonder expressed by the others. The Princess, having allowed due time for the sympathy of her hearers to exhibit itself, proceeded as follows:

"In this melancholy situation, when even the best-established and most sacred rites of the imperial household gave way to the necessity of a hasty provision for the morrow, the opinions of the counsellors were different, according to their tempers and habits; a thing, by the way, which may be remarked as likely to happen among the best and wisest on such occasions of doubt and danger.

"I do not in this place put down the names and opinions of those whose counsels were proposed and rejected, herein paying respect to the secrecy and freedom of debate justly attached to the imperial cabinet. Enough it is to say, that some there were who advised a speedy attack upon the enemy, in the direction of our original advance. Others thought it was safer, and might be easier, to force our way to the rear, and retreat by the same course which had brought us hither; nor must it be concealed, that there were persons of unsuspected fidelity, who proposed a third course, safer indeed than the others, but totally alien to the mind of

our most magnanimous father. They recommended that a confidential slave, in company with a minister of the interior of our imperial palace, should be sent to the tent of Jezdegerd, in order to ascertain upon what terms the barbarian would permit our triumphant father to retreat in safety at the head of his victorious army. On learning such opinion, our imperial father was heard to exclaim, 'Sancta Sophia!' being the nearest approach to an adjuration which he has been known to permit himself, and was apparently about to say something violent both concerning the dishonour of the advice, and the cowardice of those by whom it was preferred, when, recollecting the mutability of human things, and the misfortune of several of his Majesty's gracious predecessors, some of whom had been compelled to surrender their sacred persons to the infidels in the same region, his Imperial Majesty repressed his generous feelings, and only suffered his army counsellors to understand his sentiments by a speech, in which he declared so desperate and so dishonourable a course would be the last which he would adopt even in the last extremity of danger. Thus did the judgment of this mighty Prince at once reject counsel that seemed shameful to his arms, and thereby encourage the zeal of his troops, while privately he kept this postern in reserve, which in utmost need might serve for a safe, though not altogether, in less urgent circumstances, an honourable retreat.

"When the discussion had reached this melancholy crisis, the renowned Achilles Tatius arrived

with the hopeful intelligence, that he himself and some soldiers of his corps had discovered an opening on the left flank of our present encampment, by which, making indeed a considerable circuit, but reaching, if we marched with vigour, the town of Laodicea, we might, by falling back on our resources, be in some measure in surety from the enemy.

"So soon as this ray of hope darted on the troubled mind of our gracious father, he proceeded to make such arrangements as might secure the full benefit of the advantage. His Imperial Highness would not permit the brave Varangians, whose battle-axes he accounted the flower of his imperial army, to take the advanced post of assailants on the present occasion. He repressed the love of battle by which these generous foreigners have been at all times distinguished, and directed that the Syrian forces in the army, who have been before mentioned, should be assembled with as little noise as possible in the vicinity of the deserted pass, with instructions to occupy it. The good genius of the empire suggested that, as their speech, arms, and appearance resembled those of the enemy, they might be permitted unopposed to take post in the defile with their light-armed forces, and thus secure it for the passage of the rest of the army, of which he proposed that the Varangians, as immediately attached to his own sacred person, should form the vanguard. The well-known battalions, termed the Immortals, came next, comprising the gross of the army, and forming the centre

and rear. Achilles Tatius, the faithful Follower of his royal Master, although mortified that he was not permitted to assume the charge of the rear, which he had proposed for himself and his valiant troops, as the post of danger at the time, cheerfully acquiesced, nevertheless, in the arrangement proposed by the Emperor, as most fit to effect the imperial safety, and that of the army.

"The imperial orders, as they were sent instantly abroad, were in like manner executed with the readiest punctuality, the rather that they indicated a course of safety which had been almost despaired of even by the oldest soldiers. During the dead period of time, when, as the divine Homer tells us, gods and men are alike asleep, it was found that the vigilance and prudence of a single individual had provided safety for the whole Roman army. The pinnacles of the mountain passes were scarcely touched by the earliest beams of the dawn, when these beams were also reflected from the steel caps and spears of the Syrians, under the command of a captain named Monastras, who, with his tribe, had attached himself to the empire. The Emperor, at the head of his faithful Varangians, defiled through the passes, in order to gain that degree of advance on the road to the city of Laodicea which was desired, so as to avoid coming into collision with the barbarians.

"It was a goodly sight to see the dark mass of northern warriors, who now led the van of the army, moving slowly and steadily through the defiles of the mountains, around the insulated rocks

and precipices, and surmounting the gentler acclivities, like the course of a strong and mighty river; while the loose bands of archers and javelin-men, armed after the eastern manner, were dispersed on the steep sides of the defiles, and might be compared to light foam upon the edge of the torrent. In the midst of the squadrons of the life-guard might be seen the proud war-horse of his Imperial Majesty, which pawed the earth indignantly, as if impatient at the delay which separated him from his august burden. The Emperor Alexius himself travelled in a litter, borne by eight strong African slaves, that he might rise perfectly refreshed if the army should be overtaken by the enemy. The valiant Achilles Tatius rode near the couch of his master, that none of those luminous ideas, by which our august sire so often decided the fate of battle, might be lost for want of instant communication to those whose duty it was to execute them. I may also say, that there were close to the litter of the Emperor, three or four carriages of the same kind; one prepared for the Moon, as she may be termed, of the universe, the gracious Empress Irene. Among the others which might be mentioned, was that which contained the authoress of this history, unworthy as she may be of distinction, save as the daughter of the eminent and sacred persons whom the narration chiefly concerns. In this manner the imperial army pressed on through the dangerous defiles, where their march was exposed to insults from the barbarians. They were happily cleared without any opposition.

When we came to the descent of the pass which looks down on the city of Laodicea, the sagacity of the Emperor commanded the van—which, though the soldiers composing the same were heavily armed, had hitherto marched extremely fast—to halt, as well that they themselves might take some repose and refreshment, as to give the rearward forces time to come up, and close various gaps which the rapid movement of those in front had occasioned in the line of march.

"The place chosen for this purpose was eminently beautiful, from the small and comparatively insignificant ridge of hills which melt irregularly down into the plains stretching between the pass which we occupied and Laodicea. The town was about one hundred stadia distant, and some of our more sanguine warriors pretended that they could already discern its towers and pinnacles, glittering in the early beams of the sun, which had not as yet risen high into the horizon. A mountain torrent, which found its source at the foot of a huge rock, that yawned to give it birth, as if struck by the rod of the prophet Moses, poured its liquid treasure down to the more level country, nourishing herbage, and even large trees, in its descent, until, at the distance of some four or five miles, the stream, at least in dry seasons, was lost amid heaps of sand and stones, which in the rainy season marked the strength and fury of its current.

"It was pleasant to see the attention of the Emperor to the comforts of the companions and guardians of his march. The trumpets from time

to time gave license to various parties of the Varangians to lay down their arms, to eat the food which was distributed to them, and quench their thirst at the pure stream, which poured its bounties down the hill, or they might be seen to extend their bulky forms upon the turf around them. The Emperor, his most serene spouse, and the princesses and ladies, were also served with breakfast, at the fountain formed by the small brook in its very birth, and which the reverent feelings of the soldiers had left unpolluted by vulgar touch, for the use of that family, emphatically said to be born in the purple. Our beloved husband was also present on this occasion, and was among the first to detect one of the disasters of the day. For, although all the rest of the repast had been, by the dexterity of the officers of the imperial mouth, so arranged, even on so awful an occasion, as to exhibit little difference from the ordinary provisions of the household, yet, when his Imperial Highness called for wine, behold, not only was the sacred liquor, dedicated to his own peculiar imperial use, wholly exhausted or left behind, but, to use the language of Horace, not the vilest Sabine vintage could be procured; so that his Imperial Highness was glad to accept the offer of a rude Varangian, who proffered his modicum of decocted barley, which these barbarians prefer to the juice of the grape. The Emperor, nevertheless, accepted of this coarse tribute."

"Insert," said the Emperor, who had been hitherto either plunged in deep contemplation, or in an incipient slumber, "insert, I say, these very

words: 'And with the heat of the morning, and anxiety of so rapid a march, with a numerous enemy in his rear, the Emperor was so thirsty, as never in his life to think beverage more delicious.'"

In obedience to her imperial father's orders, the Princess resigned the manuscript to the beautiful slave by whom it was written, repeating to the fair scribe the commanded addition, requiring her to note it, as made by the express sacred command of the Emperor, and then proceeded thus:—"More I had said here respecting the favourite liquor of your Imperial Highness's faithful Varangians; but your Highness having once graced it with a word of commendation, this *ail*, as they call it, doubtless because removing all disorders, which they term 'ailments,' becomes a theme too lofty for the discussion of any inferior person. Suffice it to say, that thus were we all pleasantly engaged, the ladies and slaves trying to find some amusement for the imperial ears; the soldiers, in a long line down the ravine, seen in different postures, some straggling to the watercourse, some keeping guard over the arms of their comrades, in which duty they relieved each other, while body after body of the remaining troops, under command of the Protospathaire, and particularly those called Immortals, * joined the main army as they came up. Those soldiers who were already exhausted, were

* The Ἀθανατοι, or Immortals, of the army of Constantinople, were a select body, so named, in imitation of the ancient Persians. They were first embodied, according to Ducange, by Michael Ducas.

allowed to take a short repose, after which they were sent forward, with directions to advance steadily on the road to Laodicea; while their leader was instructed, so soon as he should open a free communication with that city, to send thither a command for reinforcements and refreshments, not forgetting fitting provision of the sacred wine for the imperial mouth. Accordingly, the Roman bands of Immortals and others had resumed their march, and held some way on their journey, it being the imperial pleasure that the Varangians, lately the vanguard, should now form the rear of the whole army, so as to bring off in safety the Syrian light troops, by whom the hilly pass was still occupied, when we heard upon the other side of this defile, which we had traversed with so much safety, the awful sound of the *Lelies*, as the Arabs name their shout of onset, though in what language it is expressed, it would be hard to say. Perchance some in this audience may enlighten my ignorance."

"May I speak and live?" said the Acoulouthos Achilles, proud of his literary knowledge, "the words are, *Alla illa alla, Mohamed resoul alla.* * These, or something like them, contain the Arabs' profession of faith, which they always call out when they join battle; I have heard them many times."

"And so have I," said the Emperor; "and as

* *i. e.* "God is God—Mahomet is the prophet of God."

thou didst, I warrant me, I have sometimes wished myself anywhere else than within hearing."

All the circle were alive to hear the answer of Achilles Tatius. He was too good a courtier, however, to make any imprudent reply. "It was my duty," he replied, "to desire to be as near your Imperial Highness, as your faithful Follower ought, wherever you might wish yourself for the time."

Agelastes and Zosimus exchanged looks, and the Princess Anna Comnena proceeded in her recitation.

"The cause of these ominous sounds, which came in wild confusion up the rocky pass, were soon explained to us by a dozen cavaliers, to whom the task of bringing intelligence had been assigned.

"These informed us, that the barbarians, whose host had been dispersed around the position in which we had encamped the preceding day, had not been enabled to get their forces together until our light troops were evacuating the post they had occupied for securing the retreat of our army. They were then drawing off from the tops of the hills into the pass itself, when, in despite of the rocky ground, they were charged furiously by Jezdegerd, at the head of a large body of his followers, which, after repeated exertions, he had at length brought to operate on the rear of the Syrians. Notwithstanding that the pass was unfavourable for cavalry, the personal exertions of the infidel chief made his followers advance with a degree of resolution unknown to the Syrians of the Roman army, who, finding themselves at a dis-

tance from their companions, formed the injurious idea that they were left there to be sacrificed, and thought of flight in various directions, rather than of a combined and resolute resistance. The state of affairs, therefore, at the further end of the pass, was less favourable than we could wish, and those whose curiosity desired to see something which might be termed the rout of the rear of an army, beheld the Syrians pursued from the hill tops, overwhelmed, and individually cut down and made prisoners by the bands of caitiff Mussulmen.

"His Imperial Highness looked upon the scene of battle for a few minutes, and, much commoved at what he saw, was somewhat hasty in his directions to the Varangians to resume their arms, and precipitate their march towards Laodicea; whereupon one of those northern soldiers said boldly, though in opposition to the imperial command, 'If we attempt to go hastily down this hill, our rearguard will be confused, not only by our own hurry, but by these runaway scoundrels of Syrians, who in their headlong flight will not fail to mix themselves among our ranks. Let two hundred Varangians, who will live and die for the honour of England, abide in the very throat of this pass with me, while the rest escort the Emperor to this Laodicea, or whatever it is called. We may perish in our defence, but we shall die in our duty; and I have little doubt but we shall furnish such a meal as will stay the stomach of these yelping hounds from seeking any farther banquet this day.'

"My imperial father at once discovered the im-

portance of this advice, though it made him well-nigh weep to see with what unshrinking fidelity these poor barbarians pressed to fill up the number of those who were to undertake this desperate duty—with what kindness they took leave of their comrades, and with what jovial shouts they followed their sovereign with their eyes as he proceeded on his march down the hill, leaving them behind to resist and perish. The Imperial eyes were filled with tears; and I am not ashamed to confess, that amid the terror of the moment, the Empress, and I myself, forgot our rank in paying a similar tribute to these bold and self-devoted men.

"We left their leader carefully arraying his handful of comrades in defence of the pass, where the middle path was occupied by their centre, while their wings on either side were so disposed as to act upon the flanks of the enemy, should he rashly press upon such as appeared opposed to him in the road. We had not proceeded half way towards the plain, when a dreadful shout arose, in which the yells of the Arabs were mingled with the deep and more regular shout which these strangers usually repeat thrice, as well when bidding hail to their commanders and princes, as when in the act of engaging in battle. Many a look was turned back by their comrades, and many a form was seen in the ranks which might have claimed the chisel of a sculptor, while the soldier hesitated whether to follow the line of his duty, which called him to march forward with his Em-

peror, or the impulse of courage, which prompted him to rush back to join his companions. Discipline, however, prevailed, and the main body marched on.

" An hour had elapsed, during which we heard, from time to time, the noise of battle, when a mounted Varangian presented himself at the side of the Emperor's litter. The horse was covered with foam, and had obviously, from his trappings, the fineness of his limbs, and the smallness of his joints, been the charger of some chief of the desert, which had fallen by the chance of battle into the possession of the northern warrior. The broad axe which the Varangian bore was also stained with blood, and the paleness of death itself was upon his countenance. These marks of recent battle were held sufficient to excuse the irregularity of his salutation, while he exclaimed,—' Noble Prince, the Arabs are defeated, and you may pursue your march at more leisure.'

" ' Where is Jezdegerd ?' said the Emperor, who had many reasons for dreading this celebrated chief.

" ' Jezdegerd,' continued the Varangian, ' is where brave men are who fall in their duty.'

" ' And that is—' said the Emperor, impatient to know distinctly the fate of so formidable an adversary——

" ' Where I am now going,' answered the faithful soldier, who dropped from his horse as he spoke, and expired at the feet of the litter bearers.

" The Emperor called to his attendants to see

that the body of this faithful retainer, to whom he destined an honourable sepulchre, was not left to the jackall or vulture; and some of his brethren, the Anglo-Saxons, among whom he was a man of no mean repute, raised the body on their shoulders, and resumed their march with this additional encumbrance, prepared to fight for their precious burden, like the valiant Menelaus for the body of Patroclus."

The Princess Anna Comnena here naturally paused; for, having attained what she probably considered as the rounding of a period, she was willing to gather an idea of the feelings of her audience. Indeed, but that she had been intent upon her own manuscript, the emotions of the foreign soldier must have more early attracted her attention. In the beginning of her recitation, he had retained the same attitude which he had at first assumed, stiff and rigid as a sentinel upon duty, and apparently remembering nothing, save that he was performing that duty in presence of the imperial court. As the narrative advanced, however, he appeared to take more interest in what was read. The anxious fears expressed by the various leaders in the midnight council, he listened to with a smile of suppressed contempt, and he almost laughed at the praises bestowed upon the leader of his own corps, Achilles Tatius. Nor did even the name of the Emperor, though listened to respectfully, gain that applause for which his daughter fought so hard, and used so much exaggeration.

Hitherto the Varangian's countenance indicated very slightly any internal emotions; but they appeared to take a deeper hold on his mind as she came to the description of the halt after the main army had cleared the pass; the unexpected advance of the Arabs; the retreat of the column which escorted the Emperor; and the account of the distant engagement. He lost, on hearing the narration of these events, the rigid and constrained look of a soldier, who listened to the history of his Emperor with the same feelings with which he would have mounted guard at his palace. His colour began to come and go; his eyes to fill and to sparkle; his limbs to become more agitated than their owner seemed to assent to; and his whole appearance was changed into that of a listener, highly interested by the recitation which he hears, and insensible, or forgetful, of whatever else is passing before him, as well as of the quality of those who are present.

As the historian proceeded, Hereward became less able to conceal his agitation; and at the moment the Princess looked round, his feelings became so acute, that, forgetting where he was, he dropped his ponderous axe upon the floor, and, clasping his hands together, exclaimed,—"My unfortunate brother!"

All were startled by the clang of the falling weapon, and several persons at once attempted to interfere, as called upon to explain a circumstance so unusual. Achilles Tatius made some small progress in a speech designed to apologize for the

rough mode of venting his sorrows to which Hereward had given way, by assuring the eminent persons present, that the poor uncultivated barbarian was actually younger brother to him who had commanded and fallen at the memorable defile. The Princess said nothing, but was evidently struck and affected, and not ill-pleased, perhaps, at having given rise to feelings of interest so flattering to her as an authoress. The others, each in their character, uttered incoherent words of what was meant to be consolation; for distress which flows from a natural cause, generally attracts sympathy even from the most artificial characters. The voice of Alexius silenced all these imperfect speakers: "Hah, my brave soldier, Edward!" said the Emperor, "I must have been blind that I did not sooner recognise thee, as I think there is a memorandum entered, respecting five hundred pieces of gold due from us to Edward the Varangian; we have it in our secret scroll of such liberalities for which we stand indebted to our servitors, nor shall the payment be longer deferred."

"Not to me, if it may please you, my liege," said the Anglo-Dane, hastily composing his countenance into its rough gravity of lineament, "lest it should be to one who can claim no interest in your imperial munificence. My name is Hereward; that of Edward is borne by three of my companions, all of them as likely as I to have deserved your Highness's reward for the faithful performance of their duty."

Many a sign was made by Tatius in order to

guard his soldier against the folly of declining the liberality of the Emperor. Agelastes spoke more plainly: "Young man," he said, "rejoice in an honour so unexpected, and answer henceforth to no other name save that of Edward, by which it hath pleased the light of the world, as it poured a ray upon thee, to distinguish thee from other barbarians. What is to thee the fontstone, or the priest officiating thereat, shouldst thou have derived from either any epithet different from that by which it hath now pleased the Emperor to distinguish thee from the common mass of humanity, and by which proud distinction thou hast now a right to be known ever afterwards?"

"Hereward was the name of my father," said the soldier, who had now altogether recovered his composure. "I cannot abandon it while I honour his memory in death. Edward is the title of my comrade—I must not run the risk of usurping his interest."

"Peace all!" interrupted the Emperor. "If we have made a mistake, we are rich enough to right it; nor shall Hereward be the poorer, if an Edward shall be found to merit this gratuity."

"Your Highness may trust that to your affectionate consort," answered the Empress Irene.

"His most sacred Highness," said the Princess Anna Comnena, "is so avariciously desirous to do whatever is good and gracious, that he leaves no room even for his nearest connexions to display generosity or munificence. Nevertheless, I, in my degree, will testify my gratitude to this brave

man; for where his exploits are mentioned in this history, I will cause to be recorded,—'This feat was done by Hereward the Anglo-Dane, whom it hath pleased his Imperial Majesty to call Edward.' Keep this, good youth," she continued, bestowing at the same time a ring of price, "in token that we will not forget our engagement."

Hereward accepted the token with a profound obeisance, and a discomposure which his station rendered not unbecoming. It was obvious to most persons present, that the gratitude of the beautiful Princess was expressed in a manner more acceptable to the youthful life-guardsman, than that of Alexius Comnenus. He took the ring with great demonstration of thankfulness: "Precious relic!" he said, as he saluted this pledge of esteem by pressing it to his lips; "we may not remain long together, but be assured," bending reverently to the Princess, "that death alone shall part us."

"Proceed, our princely daughter," said the Empress Irene; "you have done enough to show that valour is precious to her who can confer fame, whether it be found in a Roman or a barbarian."

The Princess resumed her narrative with some slight appearance of embarrassment.

"Our movement upon Laodicea was now resumed, and continued with good hopes on the part of those engaged in the march. Yet instinctively we could not help casting our eyes to the rear, which had been so long the direction in which we feared attack. At length, to our surprise, a thick cloud of dust was visible on the descent of the

hill, half way betwixt us and the place at which we had halted. Some of the troops who composed our retreating body, particularly those in the rear, began to exclaim, 'The Arabs! the Arabs!' and their march assumed a more precipitate character when they believed themselves pursued by the enemy. But the Varangian guards affirmed with one voice, that the dust was raised by the remains of their own comrades, who, left in the defence of the pass, had marched off after having so valiantly maintained the station intrusted to them. They fortified their opinion by professional remarks that the cloud of dust was more concentrated than if raised by the Arab horse, and they even pretended to assert, from their knowledge of such cases, that the number of their comrades had been much diminished in the action. Some Syrian horsemen, dispatched to reconnoitre the approaching body, brought intelligence corresponding with the opinion of the Varangians in every particular. The portion of the body-guard had beaten back the Arabs, and their gallant leader had slain their chief Jezdegerd, in which service he was mortally wounded, as this history hath already mentioned. The survivors of the detachment, diminished by one half, were now on their march to join the Emperor, as fast as the encumbrance of bearing their wounded to a place of safety would permit.

"The Emperor Alexius, with one of those brilliant and benevolent ideas which mark his paternal character towards his soldiers, ordered all the litters, even that for his own most sacred use, to be in-

stantly sent back to relieve the bold Varangians of the task of bearing the wounded. The shouts of the Varangians' gratitude may be more easily conceived than described, when they beheld the Emperor himself descend from his litter, like an ordinary cavalier, and assume his war-horse, at the same time that the most sacred Empress, as well as the authoress of this history, with other princesses born in the purple, mounted upon mules, in order to proceed upon the march, while their litters were unhesitatingly assigned for the accommodation of the wounded men. This was indeed a mark, as well of military sagacity as of humanity; for the relief afforded to the bearers of the wounded, enabled the survivors of those who had defended the defile at the fountain, to join us sooner than would otherwise have been possible.

"It was an awful thing to see those men who had left us in the full splendour which military equipment gives to youth and strength, again appearing in diminished numbers—their armour shattered—their shields full of arrows—their offensive weapons marked with blood, and they themselves exhibiting all the signs of desperate and recent battle. Nor was it less interesting to remark the meeting of the soldiers who had been engaged, with the comrades whom they had rejoined. The Emperor, at the suggestion of the trusty Acoulouthos, permitted them a few moments to leave their ranks, and learn from each other the fate of the battle.

"As the two bands mingled, it seemed a meet-

ing where grief and joy had a contest together. The most rugged of these barbarians,—and I who saw it can bear witness to the fact,—as he welcomed with a grasp of his strong hand some comrade whom he had given up for lost, had his large blue eyes filled with tears at hearing of the loss of some one whom he had hoped might have survived. Other veterans reviewed the standards which had been in the conflict, satisfied themselves that they had all been brought back in honour and safety, and counted the fresh arrow-shots with which they had been pierced, in addition to similar marks of former battles. All were loud in the praises of the brave young leader they had lost, nor were the acclamations less general in laud of him who had succeeded to the command, who brought up the party of his deceased brother—and whom," said the Princess, in a few words which seemed apparently interpolated for the occasion, "I now assure of the high honour and estimation in which he is held by the author of this history—that is, I would say, by every member of the imperial family—for his gallant services in such an important crisis."

Having hurried over her tribute to her friend the Varangian, in which emotions mingled that are not willingly expressed before so many hearers, Anna Comnena proceeded with composure in the part of her history which was less personal.

"We had not much time to make more observations on what passed among those brave soldiers; for a few minutes having been allowed to their feel-

ings, the trumpet sounded the advance towards Laodicea, and we soon beheld the town, now about four miles from us, in fields which were chiefly covered with trees. Apparently the garrison had already some notice of our approach, for carts and wains were seen advancing from the gates with refreshments, which the heat of the day, the length of the march, and columns of dust, as well as the want of water, had rendered of the last necessity to us. The soldiers joyfully mended their pace in order to meet the sooner with the supplies of which they stood so much in need. But as the cup doth not carry in all cases the liquid treasure to the lips for which it was intended, however much it may be longed for, what was our mortification to behold a cloud of Arabs issue at full gallop from the wooded plain, betwixt the Roman army and the city, and throw themselves upon the waggons, slaying the drivers, and making havoc and spoil of the contents! This, we afterwards learned, was a body of the enemy, headed by Varanes, equal in military fame, among those infidels, to Jezdegerd, his slain brother. When this chieftain saw that it was probable that the Varangians would succeed in their desperate defence of the pass, he put himself at the head of a large body of cavalry; and as these infidels are mounted on horses unmatched either in speed or wind, performed a long circuit, traversed the stony ridge of hills at a more northerly defile, and placed himself in ambuscade in the wooded plain I have mentioned, with the hope of making an unexpected assault upon the

Emperor and his army, at the very time when they might be supposed to reckon upon an undisputed retreat. This surprise would certainly have taken place, and it is not easy to say what might have been the consequence, had not the unexpected appearance of the train of waggons awakened the unbridled rapacity of the Arabs, in spite of their commander's prudence, and attempts to restrain them. In this manner the proposed ambuscade was discovered.

"But Varanes, willing still to gain some advantage from the rapidity of his movements, assembled as many of his horsemen as could be collected from the spoil, and pushed forward towards the Romans, who had stopt short on their march at so unlooked for an apparition. There was an uncertainty and wavering in our first ranks which made their hesitation known even to so poor a judge of military demeanour as myself. On the contrary, the Varangians joined in a unanimous cry of 'Bills' * (that is, in their language, battle-axes) 'to the front!' and the Emperor's most gracious will acceding to their valorous desire, they pressed forward from the rear to the head of the column. I can hardly say how this manœuvre was executed, but it was doubtless by the wise directions of my most serene father, distinguished for his presence of mind upon such difficult occasions. It was, no doubt, much facilitated by the good-will of the troops themselves; the Roman bands, called the Immor-

* Villehardouin says, "Les Anglois et Danois mult bien combattoient avec leurs *haches*."

tals, showing, as it seemed to me, no less desire to fall into the rear, than did the Varangians to occupy the places which the Immortals left vacant in front. The manœuvre was so happily executed, that before Varanes and his Arabs had arrived at the van of our troops, they found it occupied by the inflexible guard of northern soldiers. I might have seen with my own eyes, and called upon them as sure evidences of that which chanced upon the occasion. But to confess the truth, my eyes were little used to look upon such sights; for of Varanes's charge I only beheld, as it were, a thick cloud of dust rapidly driven forward, through which were seen the glittering points of lances, and the waving plumes of turbaned cavaliers imperfectly visible. The tecbir was so loudly uttered, that I was scarcely aware that kettle-drums and brazen cymbals were sounding in concert with it. But this wild and outrageous storm was met as effectually as if encountered by a rock.

"The Varangians, unshaken by the furious charge of the Arabs, received horse and rider with a shower of blows from their massive battle-axes, which the bravest of the enemy could not face, nor the strongest endure. The guards strengthened their ranks also, by the hindmost pressing so close upon those that went before, after the manner of the ancient Macedonians, that the fine-limbed, though slight steeds of these Idumeans could not make the least inroad upon the northern phalanx. The bravest men, the most gallant horses, fell in the first rank. The weighty, though short, horse

javelins, flung from the rear ranks of the brave Varangians with good aim and sturdy arm, completed the confusion of the assailants, who turned their back in affright, and fled from the field in total confusion.

"The enemy thus repulsed, we proceeded on our march, and only halted when we recovered our half-plundered waggons. Here, also, some invidious remarks were made by certain officers of the interior of the household, who had been on duty over the stores, and having fled from their posts on the assault of the infidels, had only returned upon their being repulsed. These men, quick in malice, though slow in perilous service, reported that, on this occasion, the Varangians so far forgot their duty as to consume a part of the sacred wine reserved for the imperial lips alone. It would be criminal to deny that this was a great and culpable oversight; nevertheless, our imperial hero passed it over as a pardonable offence; remarking, in a jesting manner, that since he had drank the *ail*, as they termed it, of his trusty guard, the Varangians had acquired a right to quench the thirst, and to relieve the fatigue, which they had undergone that day in his defence, though they used for these purposes the sacred contents of the imperial cellar.

"In the mean time, the cavalry of the army were dispatched in pursuit of the fugitive Arabs; and having succeeded in driving them behind the chain of hills which had so recently divided them from the Romans, the imperial arms might justly be

considered as having obtained a complete and glorious victory.

"We are now to mention the rejoicings of the citizens of Laodicea, who, having witnessed from their ramparts, with alternate fear and hope, the fluctuations of the battle, now descended to congratulate the imperial conqueror."

Here the fair narrator was interrupted. The principal entrance of the apartment flew open, noiselessly indeed, but with both folding leaves at once, not as if to accommodate the entrance of an ordinary courtier, studying to create as little disturbance as possible, but as if there was entering a person, who ranked so high as to make it indifferent how much attention was drawn to his motions. It could only be one born in the purple, or nearly allied to it, to whom such freedom was lawful; and most of the guests, knowing who were likely to appear in that Temple of the Muses, anticipated, from the degree of bustle, the arrival of Nicephorus Briennius, the son-in-law of Alexius Comnenus, the husband to the fair historian, and in the rank of Cæsar, which however did not at that period imply, as in early ages, the dignity of second person in the empire. The policy of Alexius had interposed more than one person of condition between the Cæsar, and his original rights and rank, which had once been second to those only of the Emperor himself.

CHAPTER V.

The storm increases—'tis no sunny shower,
Foster'd in the moist breast of March or April,
Or such as parched Summer cools his lip with:
Heaven's windows are flung wide; the inmost deeps
Call in hoarse greeting one upon another;
On comes the flood in all its foaming horrors,
And where's the dike shall stop it!

The Deluge, a Poem.

THE distinguished individual who entered was a noble Grecian, of stately presence, whose habit was adorned with every mark of dignity, saving those which Alexius had declared sacred to the Emperor's own person, and that of the Sebastocrator, whom he had established as next in rank to the head of the empire. Nicephorus Briennius, who was in the bloom of youth, retained all the marks of that manly beauty which had made the match acceptable to Anna Comnena; while political considerations, and the desire of attaching a powerful house as friendly adherents of the throne, recommended the union to the Emperor.

We have already hinted that the royal bride had, though in no great degree, the very doubtful

advantage of years. Of her literary talents we have seen tokens. Yet it was not believed by those who best knew, that, with the aid of those claims to respect, Anna Comnena was successful in possessing the unlimited attachment of her handsome husband. To treat her with apparent neglect, her connexion with the crown rendered impossible; while, on the other hand, the power of Nicephorus's family was too great to permit his being dictated to even by the Emperor himself. He was possessed of talents, as it was believed, calculated both for war and peace. His advice was, therefore, listened to, and his assistance required, so that he claimed complete liberty with respect to his own time, which he sometimes used with less regular attendance upon the Temple of the Muses, than the goddess of the place thought herself entitled to, or than the Empress Irene was disposed to exact on the part of her daughter. The good-humoured Alexius observed a sort of neutrality in this matter, and kept it as much as possible from becoming visible to the public, conscious that it required the whole united strength of his family to maintain his place in so agitated an empire.

He pressed his son-in-law's hand, as Nicephorus, passing his father-in-law's seat, bent his knee in token of homage. The constrained manner of the Empress indicated a more cold reception of her son-in-law, while the fair muse herself scarcely deigned to signify her attention to his arrival, when her handsome mate assumed the vacant seat

by her side, which we have already made mention of.

There was an awkward pause, during which the imperial son-in-law, coldly received when he expected to be welcomed, attempted to enter into some light conversation with the fair slave Astarte, who knelt behind her mistress. This was interrupted by the Princess commanding her attendant to enclose the manuscript within its appropriate casket, and convey it with her own hands to the cabinet of Apollo, the usual scene of the Princess's studies, as the Temple of the Muses was that commonly dedicated to her recitations.

The Emperor himself was the first to break an unpleasant silence. "Fair son-in-law," he said, "though it now wears something late in the night, you will do yourself wrong if you permit our Anna to send away that volume, with which this company have been so delectably entertained that they may well say, that the desert hath produced roses, and the barren rocks have poured forth milk and honey, so agreeable is the narrative of a toilsome and dangerous campaign, in the language of our daughter."

"The Cæsar," said the Empress, "seems to have little taste for such dainties as this family can produce. He hath of late repeatedly absented himself from this Temple of the Muses, and found doubtless more agreeable conversation and amusement elsewhere."

"I trust, madam," said Nicephorus, "that my taste may vindicate me from the charge implied.

But it is natural that our sacred father should be most delighted with the milk and honey which is produced for his own special use."

The Princess spoke in the tone of a handsome woman offended by her lover, and feeling the offence, yet not indisposed to a reconciliation.

"If," she said, "the deeds of Nicephorus Briennius are less frequently celebrated in that poor roll of parchment than those of my illustrious father, he must do me the justice to remember that such was his own special request; either proceeding from that modesty which is justly ascribed to him as serving to soften and adorn his other attributes, or because he with justice distrusts his wife's power to compose their eulogium."

"We will then summon back Astarte," said the Empress, "who cannot yet have carried her offering to the cabinet of Apollo."

"With your imperial pleasure," said Nicephorus, "it might incense the Pythian god were a deposit to be recalled of which he alone can fitly estimate the value. I came hither to speak with the Emperor upon pressing affairs of state, and not to hold a literary conversation with a company which I must needs say is something of a miscellaneous description, since I behold an ordinary lifeguardsman in the imperial circle."

"By the rood, son-in-law," said Alexius, "you do this gallant man wrong. He is the brother of that brave Anglo-Dane who secured the victory at Laodicea by his valiant conduct and death; he himself is that Edmund—or Edward—or Hereward—

to whom we are ever bound for securing the success of that victorious day. He was called into our presence, son-in-law, since it imports that you should know so much, to refresh the memory of my Follower, Achilles Tatius, as well as mine own, concerning some transactions of the day of which we had become in some degree oblivious."

"Truly, imperial sir," answered Briennius, "I grieve that, by having intruded on such important researches, I may have, in some degree, intercepted a portion of that light which is to illuminate future ages. Methinks that in a battle-field, fought under your imperial guidance, and that of your great captains, your evidence might well supersede the testimony of such a man as this.—Let me know," he added, turning haughtily to the Varangian, "what particular thou canst add, that is unnoticed in the Princess's narrative?"

The Varangian replied instantly, "Only that when we made a halt at the fountain, the music that was there made by the ladies of the Emperor's household, and particularly by those two whom I now behold, was the most exquisite that ever reached my ears."

"Hah! darest thou to speak so audacious an opinion?" exclaimed Nicephorus; "is it for such as thou to suppose for a moment, that the music which the wife and daughter of the Emperor might condescend to make, was intended to afford either matter of pleasure or of criticism to every plebeian barbarian who might hear them? Begone from this place! nor dare, on any pretext, again to ap-

pear before mine eyes—under allowance always of our imperial father's pleasure."

The Varangian bent his looks upon Achilles Tatius, as the person from whom he was to take his orders to stay or withdraw. But the Emperor himself took up the subject with considerable dignity.

"Son," he said, "we cannot permit this. On account of some love quarrel, as it would seem, betwixt you and our daughter, you allow yourself strangely to forget our imperial rank, and to order from our presence those whom we have pleased to call to attend us. This is neither right nor seemly, nor is it our pleasure that this same Hereward—or Edward—or whatever be his name—either leave us at this present moment, or do at any time hereafter regulate himself by any commands save our own, or those of our Follower, Achilles Tatius. And now, allowing this foolish affair, which I think was blown among us by the wind, to pass as it came, without farther notice, we crave to know the grave matters of state which brought you to our presence at so late an hour.—You look again at this Varangian.—Withhold not your words, I pray you, on account of his presence; for he stands as high in our trust, and we are convinced with as good reason, as any counsellor who has been sworn our domestic servant."

"To hear is to obey," returned the Emperor's son-in-law, who saw that Alexius was somewhat moved, and knew that in such cases it was neither safe nor expedient to drive him to extremity.

"What I have to say," continued he, "must so soon be public news, that it little matters who hears it; and yet the West, so full of strange changes, never sent to the Eastern half of the globe tidings so alarming as those I now came to tell your Imperial Highness. Europe, to borrow an expression from this lady, who honours me by calling me husband, seems loosened from its foundations and about to precipitate itself upon Asia"——

"So I did express myself," said the Princess Anna Comnena, "and, as I trust, not altogether unforcibly, when we first heard that the wild impulse of those restless barbarians of Europe had driven a tempest as of a thousand nations upon our western frontier, with the extravagant purpose, as they pretended, of possessing themselves of Syria, and the holy places there marked as the sepulchres of prophets, the martyrdom of saints, and the great events detailed in the blessed gospel. But that storm, by all accounts, hath burst and passed away, and we well hoped that the danger had gone with it. Devoutly shall we sorrow to find it otherwise."

"And otherwise we must expect to find it," said her husband. "It is very true, as reported to us, that a huge body of men of low rank, and little understanding, assumed arms at the instigation of a mad hermit, and took the road from Germany to Hungary, expecting miracles to be wrought in their favour, as when Israel was guided through the wilderness by a pillar of flame and a cloud. But

no showers of manna or of quails relieved their necessities, or proclaimed them the chosen people of God. No waters gushed from the rock for their refreshment. They were enraged at their sufferings, and endeavoured to obtain supplies by pillaging the country. The Hungarians, and other nations on our western frontiers, Christians, like themselves, did not hesitate to fall upon this disorderly rabble; and immense piles of bones, in wild passes and unfrequented deserts, attest the calamitous defeats which extirpated these unholy pilgrims."

"All this," said the Emperor, "we knew before; —but what new evil now threatens, since we have already escaped so important a one?"

"Knew before?" said the Prince Nicephorus. "We knew nothing of our real danger before, save that a wild herd of animals, as brutal and as furious as wild bulls, threatened to bend their way to a pasture for which they had formed a fancy, and deluged the Grecian empire, and its vicinity, in their passage, expecting that Palestine, with its streams of milk and honey, once more awaited them, as God's predestined people. But so wild and disorderly an invasion had no terrors for a civilized nation like the Romans. The brute herd was terrified by our Greek fire; it was snared and shot down by the wild nations who, while they pretend to independence, cover our frontier as with a protecting fortification. The vile multitude has been consumed even by the very quality of the provisions thrown in their way;—those wise means

of resistance which were at once suggested by the paternal care of the Emperor, and by his unfailing policy. Thus wisdom has played its part, and the bark over which the tempest had poured its thunder, has escaped, notwithstanding all its violence. But the second storm, by which the former is so closely followed, is of a new descent of these Western nations, more formidable than any which we or our fathers have yet seen. This consists not of the ignorant or of the fanatical—not of the base, the needy, and the improvident. Now,—all that wide Europe possesses of what is wise and worthy, brave and noble, are united by the most religious vows, in the same purpose."

"And what is that purpose? Speak plainly," said Alexius. "The destruction of our whole Roman empire, and the blotting out the very name of its chief from among the princes of the earth, among which it has long been predominant, can alone be an adequate motive for a confederacy such as thy speech infers."

"No such design is avowed," said Nicephorus; "and so many princes, wise men, and statesmen of eminence, aim, it is pretended, at nothing else than the same extravagant purpose announced by the brute multitude who first appeared in these regions. Here, most gracious Emperor, is a scroll, in which you will find marked down a list of the various armies which, by different routes, are approaching the vicinity of the empire. Behold, Hugh of Vermandois, called from his dignity Hugh the Great, has set sail from the shores of Italy.

Twenty knights have already announced their coming, sheathed in armour of steel, inlaid with gold, bearing this proud greeting:—'Let the Emperor of Greece, and his lieutenants, understand that Hugo, Earl of Vermandois, is approaching his territories. He is brother to the king of kings —The King of France,* namely—and is attended by the flower of the French nobility. He bears the blessed banner of St Peter, intrusted to his victorious care by the holy successor of the apostle, and warns thee of all this, that thou mayst provide a reception suitable to his rank.'"

"Here are sounding words," said the Emperor; "but the wind which whistles loudest is not always most dangerous to the vessel. We know something of this nation of France, and have heard more. They are as petulant at least as they are valiant; we will flatter their vanity till we get time and opportunity for more effectual defence. Tush! if words can pay debt, there is no fear of our exchequer becoming insolvent.—What follows here, Nicephorus? A list, I suppose, of the followers of this great count?"

"My liege, no!" answered Nicephorus Briennius; "so many independent chiefs, as your Im-

* Ducange pours out a whole ocean of authorities to show that the King of France was in those days styled *Rex*, by way of eminence. See his notes on the Alexiad. Anna Comnena in her history makes Hugh of Vermandois assume to himself the titles which could only, in the most enthusiastic Frenchman's opinion, have been claimed by his elder brother, the reigning monarch.

perial Highness sees in that memorial, so many independent European armies are advancing by different routes towards the East, and announce the conquest of Palestine from the infidels as their common object."

"A dreadful enumeration," said the Emperor, as he perused the list; "yet so far happy, that its very length assures us of the impossibility that so many princes can be seriously and consistently united in so wild a project. Thus already my eyes catch the well-known name of an old friend, our enemy—for such are the alternate chances of peace and war—Bohemond of Antioch. Is not he the son of the celebrated Robert of Apulia, so renowned among his countrymen, who raised himself to the rank of grand duke from a simple cavalier, and became sovereign of those of his warlike nation, both in Sicily and Italy? Did not the standards of the German Emperor, of the Roman Pontiff, nay, our own imperial banners, give way before him; until, equally a wily statesman and a brave warrior, he became the terror of Europe, from being a knight whose Norman castle would have been easily garrisoned by six crossbows, and as many lances? It is a dreadful family, a race of craft as well as power. But Bohemond, the son of old Robert, will follow his father's politics. He may talk of Palestine and of the interests of Christendom, but if I can make his interests the same with mine, he is not likely to be guided by any other object. So, then, with the knowledge I already possess of his wishes and projects, it may

chance that Heaven sends us an ally in the guise of an enemy.—Whom have we next? Godfrey* Duke of Bouillon—leading, I see, a most formidable band from the banks of a huge river called the Rhine. What is this person's character?"

"As we hear," replied Nicephorus, "this Godfrey is one of the wisest, noblest, and bravest of the leaders who have thus strangely put themselves in motion; and among a list of independent princes, as many in number as those who assembled for the siege of Troy, and followed, most of them, by subjects ten times more numerous, this Godfrey may be regarded as the Agamemnon. The princes and counts esteem him, because he is the foremost in the ranks of those whom they fantastically call Knights, and also on account of the good faith and generosity which he practises in all his transactions. The clergy give him credit for the highest zeal for the doctrines of religion, and a corresponding respect for the church and its dignitaries. Justice, liberality, and frankness, have equally attached to this Godfrey the lower class of the people. His general attention to moral obligations is a pledge to them that his religion is real; and, gifted with so much that is excellent, he is already, although inferior in rank, birth, and power, to many chiefs of the crusade, justly regarded as one of its principal leaders."

* Godfrey of Bouillon, Duke of Lower Lorraine—the great. Captain of the first Crusade, afterwards King of Jerusalem. See Gibbon,—or Mills, *passim*.

"Pity," said the Emperor, "that a character such as you describe this Prince to be, should be under the dominion of a fanaticism scarce worthy of Peter the Hermit, or the clownish multitude which he led, or of the very ass which he rode upon! which I am apt to think the wisest of the first multitude whom we beheld, seeing that it ran away towards Europe as soon as water and barley became scarce."

"Might I be permitted here to speak, and yet live," said Agelastes, "I would remark, that the Patriarch himself made a similar retreat so soon as blows became plenty and food scarce."

"Thou hast hit it, Agelastes," said the Emperor; "but the question now is, whether an honourable and important principality could not be formed out of part of the provinces of the Lesser Asia, now laid waste by the Turks. Such a principality, methinks, with its various advantages of soil, climate, industrious inhabitants, and a healthy atmosphere, were well worth the morasses of Bouillon. It might be held as a dependence upon the sacred Roman empire, and garrisoned, as it were, by Godfrey and his victorious Franks, would be a bulwark on that point to our just and sacred person. Ha! most holy Patriarch, would not such a prospect shake the most devout Crusader's attachment to the burning sands of Palestine?"

"Especially," answered the Patriarch, "if the prince for whom such a rich *theme** was changed into a feudal appanage, should be previously con-

* The provinces were called THEMES.

verted to the only true faith, as your Imperial Highness undoubtedly means."

"Certainly,—most unquestionably," answered the Emperor, with a due affectation of gravity, notwithstanding he was internally conscious how often he had been compelled, by state necessities, to admit, not only Latin Christians, but Manicheans, and other heretics, nay Mahomedan barbarians, into the number of his subjects, and that without experiencing opposition from the scruples of the Patriarch. "Here I find," continued the Emperor, "such a numerous list of princes and principalities in the act of approaching our boundaries, as might well rival the armies of old, who were said to have drunk up rivers, exhausted realms, and trode down forests, in their wasteful advance." As he pronounced these words, a shade of paleness came over the Imperial brow, similar to that which had already clothed in sadness most of his counsellors.

"This war of nations," said Nicephorus, "has also circumstances distinguishing it from every other, save that which his Imperial Highness hath waged in former times against those whom we are accustomed to call Franks. We must go forth against a people to whom the strife of combat is as the breath of their nostrils; who, rather than not be engaged in war, will do battle with their nearest neighbours, and challenge each other to mortal fight, as much in sport as we would defy a comrade to a chariot race. They are covered with an impenetrable armour of steel, defending them from blows of the lance and sword, and which the un-

common strength of their horses renders them able to support, though one of ours could as well bear Mount Olympus upon his loins. Their foot ranks carry a missile weapon unknown to us, termed an arbelast, or crossbow. It is not drawn with the right hand, like the bow of other nations, but by placing the feet upon the weapon itself, and pulling with the whole force of the body; and it dispatches arrows called bolts, of hard wood pointed with iron, which the strength of the bow can send through the strongest breastplates, and even through stone walls, where not of uncommon thickness."

"Enough," said the Emperor; "we have seen with our own eyes the lances of Frankish knights, and the crossbows of their infantry. If Heaven has allotted them a degree of bravery, which to other nations seems wellnigh preternatural, the Divine will has given to the Greek councils that wisdom which it hath refused to barbarians;—the art of achieving conquest by wisdom rather than brute-force,—obtaining by our skill in treaty advantages which victory itself could not have procured. If we have not the use of that dreadful weapon, which our son-in-law terms the crossbow, Heaven, in its favour, has concealed from these western barbarians the composition and use of the Greek fire,—well so called, since by Grecian hands alone it is prepared, and by such only can its lightnings be darted upon the astonished foe." The Emperor paused, and looked around him; and although the faces of his counsellors still looked blank, he boldly proceeded:

—"But to return yet again to this black scroll, containing the names of those nations who approach our frontier, here occur more than one with which, methinks, old memory should make us familiar, though our recollections are distant and confused. It becomes us to know who these men are, that we may avail ourselves of those feuds and quarrels among them, which, being blown into life, may happily divert them from the prosecution of this extraordinary attempt in which they are now united. Here is, for example, one Robert, styled Duke of Normandy, who commands a goodly band of counts, with which title we are but too well acquainted; of *earls*, a word totally strange to us, but apparently some barbaric title of honour;—and of knights, whose names are compounded, as we think, chiefly of the French language, but also of another jargon, which we are not ourselves competent to understand. To you, most reverend and most learned Patriarch, we may fittest apply for information on this subject."

"The duties of my station," replied the patriarch Zosimus, "have withheld my riper years from studying the history of distant realms; but the wise Agelastes, who hath read as many volumes as would fill the shelves of the famous Alexandrian library, can no doubt satisfy your Imperial Majesty's enquiries."

Agelastes erected himself on those enduring legs which had procured him the surname of Elephant, and began a reply to the enquiries of the Emperor, rather remarkable for readiness than

accuracy. "I have read," said he, "in that brilliant mirror which reflects the time of our fathers, the volumes of the learned Procopius, that the people separately called Normans and Angles are in truth the same race, and that Normandy, sometimes so called, is in fact a part of a district of Gaul. Beyond, and nearly opposite to it, but separated by an arm of the sea, lies a ghastly region, on which clouds and tempests for ever rest, and which is well known to its continental neighbours as the abode to which departed spirits are sent after this life. On one side of the strait dwell a few fishermen, men possessed of a strange charter, and enjoying singular privileges, in consideration of their being the living ferrymen who, performing the office of the heathen Charon, carry the spirits of the departed to the island which is their residence after death. At the dead of night, these fishermen are, in rotation, summoned to perform the duty by which they seem to hold the permission to reside on this strange coast. A knock is heard at the door of his cottage who holds the turn of this singular service, sounded by no mortal hand. A whispering, as of a decaying breeze, summons the ferryman to his duty. He hastens to his bark on the sea-shore, and has no sooner launched it than he perceives its hull sink sensibly in the water, so as to express the weight of the dead with whom it is filled. No form is seen, and though voices are heard, yet the accents are undistinguishable, as of one who speaks in his sleep. Thus he traverses the strait between the continent and the island,

impressed with the mysterious awe which affects the living when they are conscious of the presence of the dead. They arrive upon the opposite coast, where the cliffs of white chalk form a strange contrast with the eternal darkness of the atmosphere. They stop at a landing-place appointed, but disembark not, for the land is never trodden by earthly feet. Here the passage-boat is gradually lightened of its unearthly inmates, who wander forth in the way appointed to them, while the mariners slowly return to their own side of the strait, having performed for the time this singular service, by which they hold their fishing-huts and their possessions on that strange coast." Here he ceased, and the Emperor replied,—

"If this legend be actually told us by Procopius, most learned Agelastes, it shows that that celebrated historian came more near the heathen than the Christian belief respecting the future state. In truth, this is little more than the old fable of the infernal Styx. Procopius, we believe, lived before the decay of heathenism, and, as we would gladly disbelieve much which he hath told us respecting our ancestor and predecessor Justinian, so we will not pay him much credit in future in point of geographical knowledge.—Meanwhile, what ails thee, Achilles Tatius, and why dost thou whisper with that soldier?"

"My head," answered Achilles Tatius, "is at your imperial command, prompt to pay for the unbecoming trespass of my tongue. I did but ask of this Hereward here what he knew of this mat-

ter; for I have heard my Varangians repeatedly call themselves Anglo-Danes, Normans, Britons, or some other barbaric epithet, and I am sure that one or other, or it may be all, of these barbarous sounds, at different times serve to designate the birth-place of these exiles, too happy in being banished from the darkness of barbarism, to the luminous vicinity of your imperial presence."

"Speak, then, Varangian, in the name of Heaven," said the Emperor, "and let us know whether we are to look for friends or enemies in those men of Normandy who are now approaching our frontier. Speak with courage, man; and if thou apprehendest danger, remember thou servest a prince well qualified to protect thee."

"Since I am at liberty to speak," answered the life-guardsman, "although my knowledge of the Greek language, which you term the Roman, is but slight, I trust it is enough to demand of his Imperial Highness, in place of all pay, donative, or gift whatsoever, since he has been pleased to talk of designing such for me, that he would place me in the first line of battle which shall be formed against these same Normans, and their Duke Robert; and if he pleases to allow me the aid of such Varangians as, for love of me, or hatred of their ancient tyrants, may be disposed to join their arms to mine, I have little doubt so to settle our long accounts with these men, that the Grecian eagles and wolves shall do them the last office, by tearing the flesh from their bones."

"What dreadful feud is this, my soldier," said

the Emperor, "that after so many years still drives thee to such extremities when the very name of Normandy is mentioned?"

"Your Imperial Highness shall be judge," said the Varangian. "My fathers, and those of most, though not all of the corps to whom I belong, are descended from a valiant race who dwelt in the north of Germany, called Anglo-Saxons. Nobody, save a priest possessed of the art of consulting ancient chronicles, can even guess how long it is since they came to the island of Britain, then distracted with civil war. They came, however, on the petition of the natives of the island, for the aid of the Angles was requested by the southern inhabitants. Provinces were granted in recompense of the aid thus liberally afforded, and the greater proportion of the island became, by degrees, the property of the Anglo-Saxons, who occupied it at first as several principalities, and latterly as one kingdom, speaking the language, and observing the laws, of most of those who now form your imperial body-guard of Varangians, or exiles. In process of time, the Northmen became known to the people of the more southern climates. They were so called from their coming from the distant regions of the Baltic Sea—an immense ocean, sometimes frozen with ice as hard as the cliffs of Mount Caucasus. They came seeking milder regions than nature had assigned them at home; and the climate of France being delightful, and its people slow in battle, they extorted from them the grant of a large province, which was, from the name of

the new settlers, called Normandy, though I have heard my father say that was not its proper appellation. They settled there under a Duke, who acknowledged the superior authority of the King of France, that is to say, obeying him when it suited his convenience so to do.

"Now, it chanced many years since, while these two nations of Normans and Anglo-Saxons were quietly residing upon different sides of the salt-water channel which divides France from England, that William, Duke of Normandy, suddenly levied a large army, came over to Kent, which is on the opposite side of the channel, and there defeated, in a great battle, Harold, who was at that time King of the Anglo-Saxons. It is but grief to tell what followed. Battles have been fought in old time, that have had dreadful results, which years, nevertheless, could wash away; but at Hastings—O woe's me!—the banner of my country fell, never again to be raised up. Oppression has driven her wheel over us. All that was valiant amongst us have left the land; and of Englishmen—for such is our proper designation—no one remains in England save as the thrall of the invaders. Many men of Danish descent, who had found their way on different occasions to England, were blended in the common calamity. All was laid desolate by the command of the victors. My father's home lies now an undistinguished ruin, amid an extensive forest, composed out of what were formerly fair fields and domestic pastures, where a manly race derived nourishment by cultivating a friendly

soil. The fire has destroyed the church where sleep the fathers of my race; and I, the last of their line, am a wanderer in other climates—a fighter of the battles of others—the servant of a foreign, though a kind master; in a word, one of the banished—a Varangian."

"Happier in that station," said Achilles Tatius, "than in all the barbaric simplicity which your forefathers prized so highly, since you are now under the cheering influence of that smile which is the life of the world."

"It avails not talking of this," said the Varangian, with a cold gesture.

"These Normans," said the Emperor, "are then the people by whom the celebrated island of Britain is now conquered and governed?"

"It is but too true," answered the Varangian.

"They are, then, a brave and warlike people?" —said Alexius.

"It would be base and false to say otherwise of an enemy," said Hereward. "Wrong have they done me, and a wrong never to be atoned; but to speak falsehood of them were but a woman's vengeance. Mortal enemies as they are to me, and mingling with all my recollections as that which is hateful and odious, yet were the troops of Europe mustered, as it seems they are likely to be, no nation or tribe dared in gallantry claim the advance of the haughty Norman."

"And this Duke Robert, who is he?"

"That," answered the Varangian, "I cannot so well explain. He is the son—the eldest son, as

men say, of the tyrant William, who subdued England when I hardly existed, or was a child in the cradle. That William, the victor of Hastings, is now dead, we are assured by concurring testimony; but while it seems his eldest son Duke Robert has become his heir to the Duchy of Normandy, some other of his children have been so fortunate as to acquire the throne of England,—unless, indeed, like the petty farm of some obscure yeoman, the fair kingdom has been divided among the tyrant's issue."

"Concerning this," said the Emperor, "we have heard something, which we shall try to reconcile with the soldier's narrative at leisure, holding the words of this honest Varangian as positive proof, in whatsoever he avers from his own knowledge. —And now, my grave and worthy counsellors, we must close this evening's service in the Temple of the Muses, this distressing news, brought us by our dearest son-in-law the Cæsar, having induced us to prolong our worship of these learned goddesses, deeper into the night than is consistent with the health of our beloved wife and daughter; while, to ourselves, this intelligence brings subject for grave deliberation."

The courtiers exhausted their ingenuity in forming the most ingenious prayers, that all evil consequences should be averted which could attend this excessive vigilance.

Nicephorus and his fair bride spoke together as a pair equally desirous to close an accidental breach between them. "Some things thou hast said, my

Cæsar," observed the lady, "in detailing this dreadful intelligence, as elegantly turned as if the nine goddesses, to whom this temple is dedicated, had lent each her aid to the sense and expression."

"I need none of their assistance," answered Nicephorus, "since I possess a muse of my own, in whose genius are included all those attributes which the heathens vainly ascribed to the nine deities of Parnassus!"

"It is well," said the fair historian, retiring by the assistance of her husband's arm; "but if you will load your wife with praises far beyond her merits, you must lend her your arm to support her under the weighty burden you have been pleased to impose." The council parted when the imperial persons had retired, and most of them sought to indemnify themselves in more free though less dignified circles, for the constraint which they had practised in the Temple of the Muses.

CHAPTER VI.

Vain man! thou mayst esteem thy love as fair
As fond hyperboles suffice to raise.
She may be all that's matchless in her person,
And all-divine in soul to match her body;
But take this from me—thou shalt never call her
Superior to her sex, while *one* survives,
And I am her true votary.

Old Play.

Achilles Tatius, with his faithful Varangian close by his shoulder, melted from the dispersing assembly silently and almost invisibly, as snow is dissolved from its Alpine abodes as the days become more genial. No lordly step, or clash of armour, betokened the retreat of the military persons. The very idea of the necessity of guards was not ostentatiously brought forward, because, so near the presence of the Emperor, the emanation supposed to flit around that divinity of earthly sovereigns, had credit for rendering it impassive and unassailable. Thus the oldest and most skilful courtiers, among whom our friend Agelastes was not to be forgotten, were of opinion, that although the Emperor employed the ministry of the Varangians and other guards, it was rather

for form's sake, than from any danger of the commission of a crime of a kind so heinous, that it was the fashion to account it almost impossible. And this doctrine, of the rare occurrence of such a crime, was repeated from month to month in those very chambers, where it had oftener than once been perpetrated, and sometimes by the very persons who monthly laid schemes for carrying some dark conspiracy against the reigning Emperor into positive execution.

At length the captain of the life-guardsmen, and his faithful attendant, found themselves on the outside of the Blacquernal Palace. The passage which Achilles found for their exit, was closed by a postern which a single Varangian shut behind them, drawing, at the same time, bolt and bar with an ill-omened and jarring sound. Looking back at the mass of turrets, battlements, and spires, out of which they had at length emerged, Hereward could not but feel his heart lighten to find himself once more under the deep blue of a Grecian heaven, where the planets were burning with unusual lustre. He sighed and rubbed his hands with pleasure, like a man newly restored to liberty. He even spoke to his leader, contrary to his custom unless addressed:—"Methinks the air of yonder halls, valorous Captain, carries with it a perfume, which, though it may be well termed sweet, is so suffocating, as to be more suitable to sepulchrous chambers, than to the dwellings of men. Happy I am that I am free, as I trust, from its influences."

"Be happy, then," said Achilles Tatius, "since thy vile, cloddish spirit feels suffocation rather than refreshment in gales, which, instead of causing death, might recall the dead themselves to life. Yet this I will say for thee, Hereward, that, born a barbarian within the narrow circle of a savage's desires and pleasures, and having no idea of life save what thou derivest from such vile and base connexions, thou art, nevertheless, designed by nature for better things, and hast this day sustained a trial, in which, I fear me, not even one of mine own noble corps, frozen as they are into lumps of unfashioned barbarity, could have equalled thy bearing. And speak now in true faith, hast not thou been rewarded?"

"That will I never deny," said the Varangian. "The pleasure of knowing, twenty-four hours perhaps before my comrades, that the Normans are coming hither to afford us a full revenge of the bloody day of Hastings, is a lordly recompense, for the task of spending some hours in hearing the lengthened chat of a lady, who has written about she knows not what, and the flattering commentaries of the bystanders, who pretended to give her an account of what they did not themselves stop to witness."

"Hereward, my good youth," said Achilles Tatius, "thou ravest, and I think I should do well to place thee under the custody of some person of skill. Too much hardihood, my valiant soldier, is in soberness allied to overdaring. It was only

natural that thou shouldst feel a becoming pride in thy late position; yet, let it but taint thee with vanity, and the effect will be little short of madness. Why, thou hast looked boldly in the face of a Princess born in the purple, before whom my own eyes, though well used to such spectacles, are never raised beyond the foldings of her veil."

"So be it, in the name of Heaven!" replied Hereward. "Nevertheless, handsome faces were made to look upon, and the eyes of young men to see withal."

"If such be their final end," said Achilles, "never did thine, I will freely suppose, find a richer apology for the somewhat overbold license which thou tookest in thy gaze upon the Princess this evening."

"Good leader, or Follower, whichever is your favourite title," said the Anglo-Briton, "drive not to extremity a plain man, who desires to hold his duty in all honour to the imperial family. The Princess, wife of the Cæsar, and born, you tell me, of a purple colour, has now inherited, notwithstanding, the features of a most lovely woman. She hath composed a history, of which I presume not to form a judgment, since I cannot understand it; she sings like an angel; and to conclude, after the fashion of the knights of this day—though I deal not ordinarily with their language—I would say cheerfully, that I am ready to place myself in lists against any one whomsoever, who dares detract from the beauty of the imperial Anna Com-

nena's person, or from the virtues of her mind. Having said this, my noble captain, we have said all that it is competent for you to enquire into, or for me to answer. That there are handsomer women than the Princess, is unquestionable; and I question it the less, that I have myself seen a person whom I think far her superior; and with that let us close the dialogue."

"Thy beauty, thou unparalleled fool," said Achilles, "must, I ween, be the daughter of the large-bodied northern boor, living next door to him upon whose farm was brought up the person of an ass, curst with such intolerable want of judgment."

"You may say your pleasure, captain," replied Hereward; "because it is the safer for us both that thou canst not on such a topic either offend me, who hold thy judgment as light as thou canst esteem mine, or speak any derogation of a person whom you never saw, but whom, if you had seen, perchance I might not so patiently have brooked any reflections upon, even at the hands of a military superior."

Achilles Tatius had a good deal of the penetration necessary for one in his situation. He never provoked to extremity the daring spirits whom he commanded, and never used any freedom with them beyond the extent that he knew their patience could bear. Hereward was a favourite soldier, and had, in that respect at least, a sincere liking and regard for his commander: when, therefore, the Follower, instead of resenting his petulance, good-humoured-

ly apologized for having hurt his feelings, the momentary displeasure between them was at an end; the officer at once reassumed his superiority, and the soldier sunk back with a deep sigh, given to some period which was long past, into his wonted silence and reserve. Indeed the Follower had another and further design upon Hereward, of which he was as yet unwilling to do more than give a distant hint.

After a long pause, during which they approached the barracks, a gloomy fortified building constructed for the residence of their corps, the captain motioned his soldier to draw close up to his side, and proceeded to ask him, in a confidential tone—"Hereward, my friend, although it is scarce to be supposed that in the presence of the imperial family thou shouldst mark any one who did not partake of their blood, or rather, as Homer has it, who did not participate of the divine *ichor*, which, in their sacred persons, supplies the place of that vulgar fluid; yet, during so long an audience, thou mightst possibly, from his uncourtly person and attire, have distinguished Agelastes, whom we courtiers call the Elephant, from his strict observation of the rule which forbids any one to sit down or rest in the Imperial presence?"

"I think," replied the soldier, "I marked the man you mean; his age was some seventy and upwards,—a big burly person;—and the baldness which reached to the top of his head was well atoned for by a white beard of prodigious size, which descended in waving curls over his breast,

and reached to the towel with which his loins were girded, instead of the silken sash used by other persons of rank."

"Most accurately marked, my Varangian," said the officer. "What else didst thou note about this person?"

"His cloak was in its texture as coarse as that of the meanest of the people, but it was strictly clean, as if it had been the intention of the wearer to exhibit poverty, or carelessness and contempt of dress, avoiding, at the same time, every particular which implied any thing negligent, sordid, or disgusting."

"By St Sophia!" said the officer, "thou astonishest me! The Prophet Balaam was not more surprised when his ass turned round her head and spoke to him!—And what else didst thou note concerning this man? I see those who meet thee must beware of thy observation, as well as of thy battle-axe."

"If it please your Valour," answered the soldier, "we English have eyes as well as hands; but it is only when discharging our duty that we permit our tongues to dwell on what we have observed. I noted but little of this man's conversation, but from what I heard, it seemed he was not unwilling to play what we call the jester, or jack-pudding, in the conversation, a character which, considering the man's age and physiognomy, is not, I should be tempted to say, natural, but assumed for some purpose of deeper import."

"Hereward," answered his officer, "thou hast

spoken like an angel sent down to examine men's bosoms: that man, Agelastes, is a contradiction, such as earth has seldom witnessed. Possessing all that wisdom which in former times united the sages of this nation with the gods themselves, Agelastes has the same cunning as the elder Brutus, who disguised his talents under the semblance of an idle jester. He appears to seek no office—he desires no consideration—he pays suit at court only when positively required to do so; yet what shall I say, my soldier, concerning the cause of an influence gained without apparent effort, and extending almost into the very thoughts of men, who appear to act as he would desire, without his soliciting them to that purpose? Men say strange things concerning the extent of his communications with other beings, whom our fathers worshipped with prayer and sacrifice. I am determined, however, to know the road by which he climbs so high and so easily towards the point to which all men aspire at court, and it will go hard but he shall either share his ladder with me, or I will strike its support from under him. Thee, Hereward, I have chosen to assist me in this matter, as the knights among these Frankish infidels select, when going upon an adventure, a sturdy squire, or inferior attendant, to share the dangers and the recompense; and this I am moved to, as much by the shrewdness thou hast this night manifested, as by the courage which thou mayst boast, in common with, or rather beyond, thy companions."

"I am obliged, and I thank your Valour," re-

plied the Varangian, more coldly perhaps than his officer expected; "I am ready, as is my duty, to serve you in any thing consistent with God and the Emperor's claims upon my service. I would only say, that, as a sworn inferior soldier I will do nothing contrary to the laws of the empire, and, as a sincere though ignorant Christian, I will have nothing to do with the gods of the heathens, save to defy them in the name and strength of the holy saints."

"Idiot!" said Achilles Tatius, "dost thou think that I, already possessed of one of the first dignities of the empire, could meditate any thing contrary to the interests of Alexius Comnenus? or, what would be scarce more atrocious, that I, the chosen friend and ally of the reverend Patriarch Zosimus, should meddle with any thing bearing a relation, however remote, to heresy or idolatry?"

"Truly," answered the Varangian, "no one would be more surprised or grieved than I should; but when we walk in a labyrinth, we must assume and announce that we have a steady and forward purpose, which is one mode at least of keeping a straight path. The people of this country have so many ways of saying the same thing, that one can hardly know at last what is their real meaning. We English, on the other hand, can only express ourselves in one set of words, but it is one out of which all the ingenuity of the world could not extract a double meaning."

"'Tis well," said his officer, "to-morrow we will

talk more of this, for which purpose thou wilt come to my quarters a little after sunset. And hark thee, to-morrow, while the sun is in heaven, shall be thine own, either to sport thyself or to repose. Employ thy time in the latter, by my advice, since to-morrow night, like the present, may find us both watchers."

So saying, they entered the barracks, where they parted company—the commander of the life-guards taking his way to a splendid set of apartments which belonged to him in that capacity, and the Anglo-Saxon seeking his more humble accommodations as a subaltern officer of the same corps.

CHAPTER VII.

Such forces met not, nor so vast a camp,
When Agrican, with all his Northern powers,
Besieged Albracca, as romances tell,
The city of Gallaphron, from thence to win
The fairest of her sex, Angelica,
His daughter, sought by many prowess'd knights,
Both Paynim, and the Peers of Charlemagne.
Paradise Regained.

EARLY on the morning of the day following that which we have commemorated, the Imperial Council was assembled, where the number of general officers with sounding titles, disguised under a thin veil the real weakness of the Grecian empire. The commanders were numerous, and the distinctions of their rank minute, but the soldiers were very few in comparison.

The offices formerly filled by prefects, prætors, and questors, were now held by persons who had gradually risen into the authority of those officers, and who, though designated from their domestic duties about the Emperor, yet, from that very circumstance, possessed what, in that despotic court, was the most effectual source of power. A long train of officers entered the great hall of the Castle of Blacquernal, and proceeded so far together as their different grades admitted, while in each cham-

ber through which they passed in succession, a certain number of the train whose rank permitted them to advance no farther, remained behind the others. Thus, when the interior cabinet of audience was gained, which was not until their passage through ten anterooms, five persons only found themselves in the presence of the Emperor in this innermost and most sacred recess of royalty, decorated by all the splendour of the period.

The Emperor Alexius sat upon a stately throne, rich with barbaric gems and gold, and flanked on either hand, in imitation probably of Solomon's magnificence, with the form of a couchant lion in the same precious metal. Not to dwell upon other marks of splendour, a tree, whose trunk seemed also of gold, shot up behind the throne, which it overcanopied with its branches. Amid the boughs were birds of various kinds curiously wrought and enamelled, and fruit composed of precious stones seemed to glisten among the leaves. Five officers alone, the highest in the state, had the privilege of entering this sacred recess when the Emperor held council. These were—the Grand Domestic, who might be termed of rank with a modern prime minister—the Logothete, or chancellor—the Protospathaire, or commander of the guards, already mentioned—the Acolyte, or Follower, and leader of the Varangians—and the Patriarch.

The doors of this secret apartment, and the adjacent antechamber, were guarded by six deformed Nubian slaves, whose writhen and withered countenances formed a hideous contrast with their snow-

white dresses and splendid equipment. They were mutes, a species of wretches borrowed from the despotism of the East, that they might be unable to proclaim the deeds of tyranny of which they were the unscrupulous agents. They were generally held in a kind of horror, rather than compassion, for men considered that slaves of this sort had a malignant pleasure in avenging upon others the irreparable wrongs which had severed themselves from humanity.

It was a general custom, though, like many other usages of the Greeks, it would be held childish in modern times, that by means of machinery easily conceived, the lions, at the entrance of a stranger, were made, as it were, to rouse themselves and roar, after which a wind seemed to rustle the foliage of the tree, the birds hopped from branch to branch, pecked the fruit, and appeared to fill the chamber with their carolling. This display had alarmed many an ignorant foreign ambassador, and even the Grecian counsellors themselves were expected to display the same sensations of fear, succeeded by surprise, when they heard the roar of the lions, followed by the concert of the birds, although perhaps it was for the fiftieth time. On this occasion, as a proof of the urgency of the present meeting of the council, these ceremonies were entirely omitted.

The speech of the Emperor himself seemed to supply by its commencement the bellowing of the lions, while it ended in a strain more resembling the warbling of the birds.

In his first sentences, he treated of the audacity and unheard-of boldness of the millions of Franks, who, under the pretence of wresting Palestine from the infidels, had ventured to invade the sacred territories of the empire. He threatened them with such chastisement as his innumerable forces and officers would, he affirmed, find it easy to inflict. To all this the audience, and especially the military officers, gave symptoms of ready assent.

Alexius, however, did not long persist in the warlike intentions which he at first avowed. The Franks, he at length seemed to reflect, were, in profession, Christians. They might possibly be serious in their pretext of a crusade, in which case their motives claimed a degree of indulgence, and, although erring, a certain portion of respect. Their numbers also were great, and their valour could not be despised by those who had seen them fight at Durazzo,* and elsewhere. They might also, by the permission of Supreme Providence, be, in the long run, the instruments of advantage to the most sacred empire, though they approached it with so little ceremony. He had, therefore, mingling the virtues of prudence, humanity, and generosity, with that valour which must always burn in the heart of an Emperor, formed a plan, which he was about to submit to their consideration, for present execution; and, in the first place, he requested of the Grand Domestic, to let him know what forces he

* For the battle of Durazzo, Oct. 1081, in which Alexius was defeated with great slaughter by Robert Guiscard, and escaped only by the swiftness of his horse, see Gibbon, ch. 56.

might count upon on the western side of the Bosphorus.

"Innumerable are the forces of the empire as the stars in heaven, or the sand on the sea-shore," answered the Grand Domestic.

"That is a goodly answer," said the Emperor, "provided there were strangers present at this conference; but since we hold consultation in private, it is necessary that I know precisely to what number that army amounts which I have to rely upon. Reserve your eloquence till some fitter time, and let me know what you, at this present moment, mean by the word *innumerable?*"

The Grand Domestic paused, and hesitated for a short space; but as he became aware that the moment was one in which the Emperor could not be trifled with, (for Alexius Comnenus was at times dangerous,) he answered thus, but not without hesitation. "Imperial master and lord, none better knows that such an answer cannot be hastily made, if it is at the same time to be correct in its results. The number of the imperial host betwixt this city and the western frontier of the empire, deducing those absent upon furlough, cannot be counted upon as amounting to more than twenty-five thousand men, or thirty thousand at most."

Alexius struck his forehead with his hand; and the counsellors, seeing him give way to such violent expressions of grief and surprise, began to enter into discussions, which they would otherwise have reserved for a fitter place and time.

"By the trust your Highness reposes in me,"

said the Logothete, "there has been drawn from your Highness's coffers during the last year, gold enough to pay double the number of the armed warriors whom the Grand Domestic now mentions."

"Your Imperial Highness," retorted the impeached minister, with no small animation, "will at once remember the stationary garrisons, in addition to the movable troops, for which this figure-caster makes no allowance."

"Peace, both of you!" said Alexius, composing himself hastily; "our actual numbers are in truth less than we counted on, but let us not by wrangling augment the difficulties of the time. Let those troops be dispersed in valleys, in passes, behind ridges of hills, and in difficult ground, where a little art being used in the position, can make few men supply the appearance of numbers, between this city and the western frontier of the empire. While this disposal is made, we will continue to adjust with these crusaders, as they call themselves, the terms on which we will consent to let them pass through our dominions; nor are we without hope of negotiating with them, so as to gain great advantage to our kingdom. We will insist that they pass through our country only by armies of perhaps fifty thousand at once, whom we will successively transport into Asia, so that no greater number shall, by assembling beneath our walls, ever endanger the safety of the metropolis of the world.

"On their way towards the banks of the Bosphorus, we will supply them with provisions, if they

march peaceably, and in order; and if any straggle from their standards, or insult the country by marauding, we suppose our valiant peasants will not hesitate to repress their excesses, and that without our giving positive orders, since we would not willingly be charged with any thing like a breach of engagement. We suppose, also, that the Scythians, Arabs, Syrians, and other mercenaries in our service, will not suffer our subjects to be overpowered in their own just defence; as, besides that there is no justice in stripping our own country of provisions, in order to feed strangers, we will not be surprised, nor unpardonably displeased to learn, that of the ostensible quantity of flour, some sacks should be found filled with chalk, or lime, or some such substance. It is, indeed, truly wonderful, what the stomach of a Frank will digest comfortably. Their guides, also, whom you shall choose with reference to such duty, will take care to conduct the crusaders by difficult and circuitous routes; which will be doing them a real service, by inuring them to the hardships of the country and climate, which they would otherwise have to face without seasoning.

"In the mean time, in your intercourse with their chiefs, whom they call counts, each of whom thinks himself as great as an Emperor, you will take care to give no offence to their natural presumption, and omit no opportunity of informing them of the wealth and bounty of our government. Sums of money may be even given to persons of note, and largesses of less avail to those under them. You,

our Logothete, will take good order for this, and you, our Grand Domestic, will take care that such soldiers as may cut off detached parties of the Franks shall be presented, if possible, in savage dress, and under the show of infidels. In commending these injunctions to your care, I purpose that, the crusaders having found the value of our friendship, and also in some sort the danger of our enmity, those whom we shall safely transport to Asia, shall be, however unwieldy, still a smaller and more compact body, whom we may deal with in all Christian prudence. Thus, by using fair words to one, threats to another, gold to the avaricious, power to the ambitious, and reasons to those that are capable of listening to them, we doubt not but to prevail upon those Franks, met as they are from a thousand points, and enemies of each other, to acknowledge us as their common superior, rather than choose a leader among themselves, when they are made aware of the great fact, that every village in Palestine, from Dan to Beersheba, is the original property of the sacred Roman empire, and that whatever Christian goes to war for their recovery, must go as our subject, and hold any conquest which he may make, as our vassal. Vice and virtue, sense and folly, ambition and disinterested devotion, will alike recommend to the survivors of these singular-minded men, to become the feudatories of the empire, not its foe, and the shield, not the enemy, of your paternal Emperor."

There was a general inclination of the head

among the courtiers, with the Eastern exclamation of,—"Long live the Emperor!"

When the murmur of this applausive exclamation had subsided, Alexius proceeded:—"Once more, I say, that my faithful Grand Domestic, and those who act under him, will take care to commit the execution of such part of these orders as may seem aggressive, to troops of foreign appearance and language, which, I grieve to say, are more numerous in our imperial army than our natural born and orthodox subjects."

The Patriarch here interposed his opinion.—"There is a consolation," he said, "in the thought, that the genuine Romans in the imperial army are but few, since a trade so bloody as war, is most fitly prosecuted by those whose doctrines, as well as their doings, on earth, merit eternal condemnation in the next world."

"Reverend Patriarch," said the Emperor, "we would not willingly hold, with the wild infidels, that Paradise is to be gained by the sabre; nevertheless, we would hope that a Roman dying in battle for his religion and his Emperor, may find as good hope of acceptation, after the mortal pang is over, as a man who dies in peace, and with unblooded hand."

"It is enough for me to say," resumed the Patriarch, "that the Church's doctrine is not so indulgent: she is herself peaceful, and her promises of favour are for those who have been men of peace. Yet think not I bar the gates of heaven against a soldier, as such, if believing all the doctrines of our

church, and complying with all our observances; far less would I condemn your Imperial Majesty's wise precautions, both for diminishing the power and thinning the ranks of those Latin heretics, who come hither to despoil us, and plunder perhaps both church and temple, under the vain pretext that Heaven would permit them, stained with so many heresies, to reconquer that Holy Land, which true orthodox Christians, your Majesty's sacred predecessors, have not been enabled to retain from the infidel. And well I trust that no settlement made under the Latins will be permitted by your Majesty to establish itself, in which the Cross shall not be elevated with limbs of the same length, instead of that irregular and most damnable error which prolongs, in western churches, the nether limb of that most holy emblem."

"Reverend Patriarch," answered the Emperor, "do not deem that we think lightly of your weighty scruples; but the question is now, not in what manner we may convert these Latin heretics to the true faith, but how we may avoid being overrun by their myriads, which resemble those of the locusts by which their approach was preceded and intimated."

"Your Majesty," said the Patriarch, "will act with your usual wisdom; for my part, I have only stated my doubts, that I may save my own soul alive."

"Our construction," said the Emperor, "does your sentiments no wrong, most reverend Patriarch; and you," addressing himself to the other

counsellors, "will attend to these separate charges given out for directing the execution of the commands which have been generally intimated to you. They are written out in the sacred ink, and our sacred subscription is duly marked with the fitting tinge of green and purple. Let them, therefore, be strictly obeyed. Ourselves will assume the command of such of the Immortal Bands as remain in the city, and join to them the cohorts of our faithful Varangians. At the head of these troops, we will await the arrival of these strangers under the walls of the city, and, avoiding combat while our policy can postpone it, we will be ready, in case of the worst, to take whatsoever chance it shall please the Almighty to send us."

Here the council broke up, and the different chiefs began to exert themselves in the execution of their various instructions, civil and military, secret or public, favourable or hostile to the crusaders. The peculiar genius of the Grecian people was seen upon this occasion. Their loud and boastful talking corresponded with the ideas which the Emperor wished to enforce upon the crusaders concerning the extent of his power and resources. Nor is it to be disguised, that the wily selfishness of most of those in the service of Alexius, endeavoured to find some indirect way of applying the imperial instruction, so as might best suit their own private ends.

Mean time, the news had gone abroad in Constantinople of the arrival of the huge miscellaneous army of the west upon the limits of the

Grecian empire, and of their purpose to pass to Palestine. A thousand reports magnified, if that was possible, an event so wonderful. Some said, that their ultimate view was the conquest of Arabia, the destruction of the Prophet's tomb, and the conversion of his green banner into a horse-cloth for the King of France's brother. Others supposed that the ruin and sack of Constantinople was the real object of the war. A third class thought it was in order to compel the Patriarch to submit himself to the Pope, adopt the Latin form of the cross, and put an end to the schism.

The Varangians enjoyed an addition to this wonderful news, seasoned as it everywhere was with something peculiarly suited to the prejudices of the hearers. It was gathered originally from what our friend Hereward, who was one of their inferior officers, called sergeants or constables, had suffered to transpire of what he had heard the preceding evening. Considering that the fact must be soon matter of notoriety, he had no hesitation to give his comrades to understand that a Norman army was coming hither under Duke Robert, the son of the far-famed William the Conqueror, and with hostile intentions, he concluded, against them in particular. Like all other men in peculiar circumstances, the Varangians adopted an explanation applicable to their own condition. These Normans, who hated the Saxon nation, and had done so much to dishonour and oppress them, were now following them, they supposed, to the foreign capital where they had found refuge, with the pur-

pose of making war on the bountiful prince who protected their sad remnant. Under this belief, many a deep oath was sworn in Norse and Anglo-Saxon, that their keen battle-axes should avenge the slaughter of Hastings, and many a pledge, both in wine and ale, was quaffed, who should most deeply resent, and most effectually revenge, the wrongs which the Anglo-Saxons of England had received at the hand of their oppressors.

Hereward, the author of this intelligence, began soon to be sorry that he had ever suffered it to escape him, so closely was he cross-examined concerning its precise import, by the enquiries of his comrades, from whom he thought himself obliged to keep concealed the adventures of the preceding evening, and the place in which he had gained his information.

About noon, when he was effectually tired with returning the same answer to the same questions, and evading similar others which were repeatedly put to him, the sound of trumpets announced the presence of the Acolyte Achilles Tatius, who came immediately, it was industriously whispered, from the sacred Interior, with news of the immediate approach of war.

The Varangians, and the Roman bands called Immortal, it was said, were to form a camp under the city, in order to be prompt to defend it at the shortest notice. This put the whole barracks into commotion, each man making the necessary provision for the approaching campaign. The noise was chiefly that of joyful bustle and acclamation; and

it was so general, that Hereward, whose rank permitted him to commit to a page or esquire, the task of preparing his equipments, took the opportunity to leave the barracks, in order to seek some distant place apart from his comrades, and enjoy his solitary reflections upon the singular connexion into which he had been drawn, and his direct communication with the Imperial family.

Passing through the narrow streets, then deserted on account of the heat of the sun, he reached at length one of those broad terraces, which, descending, as it were by steps, upon the margin of the Bosphorus, formed one of the most splendid walks in the universe, and still, it is believed, preserved as a public promenade for the pleasure of the Turks, as formerly for that of the Christians. These graduated terraces were planted with many trees, among which the cypress, as usual, was most generally cultivated. Here bands of the inhabitants were to be seen: some passing to and fro, with business and anxiety in their faces; some standing still in groups, as if discussing the strange and weighty tidings of the day, and some, with the indolent carelessness of an eastern climate, eating their noontide refreshment in the shade, and spending their time as if their sole object was to make much of the day as it passed, and let the cares of to-morrow answer for themselves.

While the Varangian, afraid of meeting some acquaintance in this concourse, which would have been inconsistent with the desire of seclusion which had brought him thither, descended or passed from

one terrace to another, all marked him with looks of curiosity and enquiry, considering him to be one, who, from his arms and connexion with the court, must necessarily know more than others concerning the singular invasion by numerous enemies, and from various quarters, which was the news of the day. None, however, had the hardihood to address the soldier of the guard, though all looked at him with uncommon interest. He walked from the lighter to the darker alleys, from the more closed to the more open terraces, without interruption from any one, yet not without a feeling that he must not consider himself as alone.

The desire that he felt to be solitary rendered him at last somewhat watchful, so that he became sensible that he was dogged by a black slave, a personage not so unfrequent in the streets of Constantinople as to excite any particular notice. His attention, however, being at length fixed on this individual, he began to be desirous to escape his observation; and the change of place which he had at first adopted to avoid society in general, he had now recourse to, in order to rid himself of this distant, though apparently watchful attendant. Still, however, though he by change of place had lost sight of the negro for a few minutes, it was not long ere he again discovered him, at a distance too far for a companion, but near enough to serve all the purposes of a spy. Displeased at this, the Varangian turned short in his walk, and choosing a spot where none was in sight but the object of his resentment, walked suddenly up to him, and de-

manded wherefore, and by whose orders, he presumed to dog his footsteps. The negro answered in a jargon as bad as that in which he was addressed, though of a different kind, "that he had orders to remark whither he went."

"Orders from whom?" said the Varangian.

"From my master and yours," answered the negro, boldly.

"Thou infidel villain!" exclaimed the angry soldier, "when was it that we became fellow-servants, and who is it that thou darest to call my master?"

"One who is master of the world," said the slave, "since he commands his own passions."

"I shall scarce command mine," said the Varangian, "if thou repliest to my earnest questions with thine affected quirks of philosophy. Once more, what dost thou want with me? and why hast thou the boldness to watch me?"

"I have told thee already," said the slave, "that I do my master's commands."

"But I must know who thy master is," said Hereward.

"He must tell thee that himself," replied the negro; "he trusts not a poor slave like me with the purpose of the errands on which he sends me."

"He has left thee a tongue, however," said the Varangian, "which some of thy countrymen would, I think, be glad to possess. Do not provoke me to abridge it by refusing me the information which I have a right to demand."

The black meditated, as it seemed from the grin

on his face, further evasions, when Hereward cut them short by raising the staff of his battle-axe. "Put me not," he said, "to dishonour myself by striking thee with this weapon, calculated for a use so much more noble."

"I may not do so, valiant sir," said the negro, laying aside an impudent, half-gibing tone which he had hitherto made use of, and betraying personal fear in his manner. "If you beat the poor slave to death, you cannot learn what his master hath forbid him to tell. A short walk will save your honour the stain, and yourself the trouble, of beating what cannot resist, and me the pain of enduring what I can neither retaliate nor avoid."

"Lead on then," said the Varangian. "Be assured thou shalt not fool me by thy fair words, and I will know the person who is impudent enough to assume the right of watching my motions."

The black walked on with a species of leer peculiar to his physiognomy, which might be construed as expressive either of malice or of mere humour. The Varangian followed him with some suspicion, for it happened that he had had little intercourse with the unhappy race of Africa, and had not totally overcome the feeling of surprise with which he had at first regarded them, when he arrived a stranger from the north. So often did this man look back upon him during their walk, and with so penetrating and observing a cast of countenance, that Hereward felt irresistibly renewed in his mind the English prejudices, which assigned to the demons the sable colour and distorted cast of

visage of his conductor. The scene into which he was guided, strengthened an association which was not of itself unlikely to occur to the ignorant and martial islander.

The negro led the way from the splendid terraced walks which we have described, to a path descending to the sea-shore, when a place appeared, which, far from being trimmed, like other parts of the coast, into walks or embankments, seemed, on the contrary, abandoned to neglect, and was covered with the mouldering ruins of antiquity, where these had not been overgrown by the luxuriant vegetation of the climate. These fragments of building, occupying a sort of recess of the bay, were hidden by steep banks on each side, and although in fact they formed part of the city, yet they were not seen from any part of it, and, embosomed in the manner we have described, did not in turn command any view of the churches, palaces, towers, and fortifications, amongst which they lay. The sight of this solitary, and apparently deserted spot, encumbered with ruins, and overgrown with cypress and other trees, situated as it was in the midst of a populous city, had something in it impressive and awful to the imagination. The ruins were of an ancient date, and in the style of a foreign people. The gigantic remains of a portico, the mutilated fragments of statues of great size, but executed in a taste and attitude so narrow and barbaric as to seem perfectly the reverse of the Grecian, and the half-defaced hieroglyphics which could be traced on some part of the decay-

ed sculpture, corroborated the popular account of their origin, which we shall briefly detail.

According to tradition, this had been a temple dedicated to the Egyptian goddess Cybele, built while the Roman Empire was yet heathen, and while Constantinople was still called by the name of Byzantium. It is well known that the superstition of the Egyptians,—vulgarly gross in its literal meaning as well as in its mystical interpretation, and peculiarly the foundation of many wild doctrines,—was disowned by the principles of general toleration, and the system of polytheism received by Rome, and was excluded by repeated laws from the respect paid by the empire to almost every other religion, however extravagant or absurd. Nevertheless, these Egyptian rites had charms for the curious and the superstitious, and had, after long opposition, obtained a footing in the empire.

Still, although tolerated, the Egyptian priests were rather considered as sorcerers than as pontiffs, and their whole ritual had a nearer relation to magic, in popular estimation, than to any regular system of devotion.

Stained with these accusations, even among the heathen themselves, the worship of Egypt was held in more mortal abhorrence by the Christians, than the other and more rational kinds of heathen devotion; that is, if any at all had a right to be termed so. The brutal worship of Apis and Cybele was regarded, not only as a pretext for obscene and profligate pleasures, but as having a direct tendency to open and encourage a dangerous com-

merce with evil spirits, who were supposed to take upon themselves, at these unhallowed altars, the names and characters of these foul deities. Not only, therefore, the temple of Cybele, with its gigantic portico, its huge and inelegant statues, and its fantastic hieroglyphics, was thrown down and defaced when the empire was converted to the Christian faith, but the very ground on which it stood was considered as polluted and unhallowed; and no Emperor having yet occupied the site with a Christian church, the place still remained neglected and deserted, as we have described it.

The Varangian Hereward was perfectly acquainted with the evil reputation of the place; and when the negro seemed disposed to advance into the interior of the ruins, he hesitated, and addressed his guide thus:—"Hark thee, my black friend, these huge fantastic images, some having dogs' heads, some cows' heads, and some no heads at all, are not held reverently in popular estimation. Your own colour, also, my comrade, is greatly too like that of Satan himself, to render you an unsuspicious companion amid ruins, in which the false spirit, it is said, daily walks his rounds. Midnight and Noon are the times, it is rumoured, of his appearance. I will go no farther with you, unless you assign me a fit reason for so doing."

"In making so childish a proposal," said the negro, "you take from me, in effect, all desire to guide you to my master. I thought I spoke to a man of invincible courage, and of that good sense

upon which courage is best founded. But your valour only emboldens you to beat a black slave, who has neither strength nor title to resist you; and your courage is not enough to enable you to look without trembling on the dark side of a wall, even when the sun is in the heaven."

"Thou art insolent," said Hereward, raising his axe.

"And thou art foolish," said the negro, "to attempt to prove thy manhood and thy wisdom by the very mode which gives reason for calling them both in question. I have already said there can be little valour in beating a wretch like me; and no man, surely, who wishes to discover his way, would begin by chasing away his guide."

"I follow thee,"— said Hereward, stung with the insinuation of cowardice; "but if thou leadest me into a snare, thy free talk shall not save thy bones, if a thousand of thy complexion, from earth or hell, were standing ready to back thee."

"Thou objectest sorely to my complexion," said the negro; "how knowest thou that it is, in fact, a thing to be counted and acted upon as matter of reality? Thine own eyes daily apprize thee, that the colour of the sky nightly changes from bright to black, yet thou knowest that this is by no means owing to any habitual colour of the heavens themselves. The same change that takes place in the hue of the heavens, has existence in the tinge of the deep sea—How canst thou tell, but what the difference of my colour from thine own may be

owing to some deceptious change of a similar nature—not real in itself, but only creating an apparent reality ?"

" Thou mayst have painted thyself, no doubt," answered the Varangian, upon reflection, " and thy blackness, therefore, may be only apparent ; but I think thy old friend himself could hardly have presented these grinning lips, with the white teeth and flattened nose, so much to the life, unless that peculiarity of Nubian physiognomy, as they call it, had accurately and really an existence ; and, to save thee some trouble, my dark friend, I will tell thee, that though thou speakest to an uneducated Varangian, I am not entirely unskilled in the Grecian art of making subtle words pass upon the hearers instead of reason."

" Ay ?" said the negro, doubtfully, and somewhat surprised ; " and may the slave Diogenes—for so my master has christened me—enquire into the means by which you reached knowledge so unusual ?"

" It is soon told," replied Hereward. " My countryman, Witikind, being a constable of our bands, retired from active service, and spent the end of a long life in this city of Constantinople. Being past all toils of battle, either those of reality, as you word it, or the pomp and fatigue of the exercising ground, the poor old man, in despair of something to pass his time, attended the lectures of the philosophers."

" And what did he learn there ?" said the negro ;

" for a barbarian, grown grey under the helmet, was not, as I think, a very hopeful student in our schools."

" As much though, I should think, as a menial slave, which I understand to be thy condition," replied the soldier. " But I have understood from him, that the masters of this idle science make it their business to substitute, in their argumentations, mere words instead of ideas; and as they never agree upon the precise meaning of the former, their disputes can never arrive at a fair or settled conclusion, since they do not agree in the language in which they express them. Their theories, as they call them, are built on the sand, and the wind and tide shall prevail against them."

" Say so to my master," answered the black, in a serious tone.

" I will," said the Varangian; " and he shall know me as an ignorant soldier, having but few ideas, and those only concerning my religion and my military duty. But out of these opinions I will neither be beaten by a battery of sophisms, nor cheated by the arts or the terrors of the friends of heathenism, either in this world or the next."

" You may speak your mind to him then yourself," said Diogenes. He stepped to a side, as if to make way for the Varangian, to whom he motioned to go forward.

Hereward advanced accordingly, by a half-worn and almost imperceptible path leading through the long rough grass, and, turning round a half-demo-

lished shrine, which exhibited the remains of Apis, the bovine deity, he came immediately in front of the philosopher, Agelastes, who, sitting among the ruins, reposed his limbs on the grass.

CHAPTER VIII.

Through the vain webs which puzzle sophists' skill,
Plain sense and honest meaning work their way;
So sink the varying clouds upon the hill,
When the clear dawning brightens into day.
DR WATTS.

THE old man rose from the ground with alacrity, as Hereward approached. "My bold Varangian," he said, "thou who valuest men and things not according to the false estimate ascribed to them in this world, but to their real importance and actual value, thou art welcome, whatever has brought thee hither—thou art welcome to a place, where it is held the best business of philosophy to strip man of his borrowed ornaments, and reduce him to the just value of his own attributes of body and mind, singly considered."

"You are a courtier, sir," said the Saxon, "and, as a permitted companion of the Emperor's Highness, you must be aware, that there are twenty times more ceremonies than such a man as I can be acquainted with, for regulating the different ranks in society; while a plain man like myself may be well excused from pushing himself into the

company of those above him, where he does not exactly know how he should comport himself."

"True," said the philosopher; "but a man like yourself, noble Hereward, merits more consideration in the eyes of a real philosopher, than a thousand of those mere insects, whom the smiles of a court call into life, and whom its frowns reduce to annihilation."

"You are yourself, grave sir, a follower of the court," said Hereward.

"And a most punctilious one," said Agelastes. "There is not, I trust, a subject in the empire who knows better the ten thousand punctilios exigible from those of different ranks, and due to different authorities. The man is yet to be born who has seen me take advantage of any more commodious posture than that of standing, in presence of the royal family. But though I use those false scales in society, and so far conform to its errors, my real judgment is of a more grave character, and more worthy of man, as said to be formed in the image of his Creator."

"There can be small occasion," said the Varangian, "to exercise your judgment in any respect upon me, nor am I desirous that any one should think of me otherwise than I am;—a poor exile, namely, who endeavours to fix his faith upon Heaven, and to perform his duty to the world he lives in, and to the prince in whose service he is engaged.—And now, grave sir, permit me to ask, whether this meeting is by your desire, and for what

is its purpose? An African slave, whom I met in the public walks, and who calls himself Diogenes, tells me that you desired to speak with me; he hath somewhat the humour of the old scoffer, and so he may have lied. If so, I will even forgive him the beating which I owe his assurance, and make my excuse at the same time for having broken in upon your retirement, which I am totally unfit to share."

"Diogenes has not played you false," answered Agelastes; "he has his humours, as you remarked even now, and with these some qualities also that put him upon a level with those of fairer complexion and better features."

"And for what," said the Varangian, "have you so employed him? Can your wisdom possibly entertain a wish to converse with me?"

"I am an observer of nature and of humanity," answered the philosopher; "is it not natural that I should tire of those beings who are formed entirely upon artifice, and long to see something more fresh from the hand of nature?"

"You see not that in me," said the Varangian; "the rigour of military discipline, the camp—the centurion—the armour—frame a man's sentiments and limbs to them, as the sea-crab is framed to its shell. See one of us, and you see us all."

"Permit me to doubt that," said Agelastes; "and to suppose that, in Hereward, the son of Waltheoff, I see an extraordinary man, although he himself may be ignorant, owing to his modesty of the rarity of his own good qualities."

"The son of Waltheoff!" answered the Varangian, somewhat startled.—"Do you know my father's name?"

"Be not surprised," answered the philosopher, "at my possessing so simple a piece of information. It has cost me but little trouble to attain it, yet I would gladly hope that the labour I have taken in that matter may convince you of my real desire to call you friend."

"It was indeed an unusual compliment," said Hereward, "that a man of your knowledge and station should be at the trouble to enquire, among the Varangian cohorts, concerning the descent of one of their constables. I scarcely think that my commander, the Acolyte himself, would think such knowledge worthy of being collected or preserved."

"Greater men than he," said Agelastes, "certainly would not——You know one in high office, who thinks the names of his most faithful soldiers of less moment than those of his hunting dogs or his hawks, and would willingly save himself the trouble of calling them otherwise than by a whistle."

"I may not hear this," answered the Varangian.

"I would not offend you," said the philosopher, "I would not even shake your good opinion of the person I allude to; yet it surprises me that such should be entertained by one of your great qualities."

"A truce with this, grave sir, which is in fact trifling in a person of your character and appear-

ance," answered the Anglo-Saxon. "I am like the rocks of my country; the fierce winds cannot shake me, the soft rains cannot melt me; flattery and loud words are alike lost upon me."

"And it is even for that inflexibility of mind," replied Agelastes, "that steady contempt of every thing that approaches thee, save in the light of a duty, that I demand, almost like a beggar, that personal acquaintance, which thou refusest like a churl."

"Pardon me," said Hereward, "if I doubt this. Whatever stories you may have picked up concerning me, not unexaggerated probably—since the Greeks do not keep the privilege of boasting so entirely to themselves but the Varangians have learned a little of it—you can have heard nothing of me which can authorize your using your present language, excepting in jest."

"You mistake, my son," said Agelastes; "believe me not a person to mix in the idle talk respecting you, with your comrades at the ale-cup. Such as I am, I can strike on this broken image of Anubis"—(here he touched a gigantic fragment of a statue by his side)—"and bid the spirit who long prompted the oracle, descend, and once more reanimate the trembling mass. We that are initiated enjoy high privileges—we stamp upon those ruined vaults, and the echo which dwells there answers to our demand. Do not think, that although I crave thy friendship, I need therefore supplicate thee for information either respecting thyself or others."

"Your words are wonderful," said the Anglo-Saxon; "but by such promising words I have heard that many souls have been seduced from the path of heaven. My grandsire, Kenelm, was wont to say, that the fair words of the heathen philosophy were more hurtful to the Christian faith than the menaces of the heathen tyrants."

"I knew him," said Agelastes. "What avails it whether it was in the body or in the spirit?—He was converted from the faith of Woden by a noble monk, and died a priest at the shrine of St Augustin."*

"True—" said Hereward; "all this is certain—and I am the rather bound to remember his words now that he is dead and gone. When I hardly knew his meaning, he bid me beware of the doctrine which causeth to err, which is taught by false prophets, who attest their doctrine by unreal miracles."

"This," said Agelastes, "is mere superstition. Thy grandsire was a good and excellent man, but narrow-minded, like other priests; and, deceived by their example, he wished but to open a small wicket in the gate of truth, and admit the world only on that limited scale. Seest thou, Hereward, thy grandsire and most men of religion would fain narrow our intellect to the consideration of such parts of the immaterial world as are essential to our moral guidance here, and our final salvation hereafter; but it is not the less true, that man has

* At Canterbury.

liberty, provided he has wisdom and courage, to form intimacies with beings more powerful than himself, who can defy the bounds of space by which he is circumscribed, and overcome, by their metaphysical powers, difficulties which, to the timid and unlearned, may appear wild and impossible."

"You talk of a folly," answered Hereward, "at which childhood gapes and manhood smiles."

"On the contrary," said the sage, "I talk of a longing wish which every man feels at the bottom of his heart, to hold communication with beings more powerful than himself, and who are not naturally accessible to our organs. Believe me, Hereward, so ardent and universal an aspiration had not existed in our bosoms, had there not also been means, if steadily and wisely sought, of attaining its accomplishment. I will appeal to thine own heart, and prove to thee, even by a single word, that what I say is truth. Thy thoughts are even now upon a being long absent or dead, and with the name of BERTHA, a thousand emotions rush to thy heart, which in thy ignorance thou hadst esteemed furled up for ever, like spoils of the dead hung above a tombstone!—Thou startest and changest thy colour—I joy to see by these signs, that the firmness and indomitable courage which men ascribe to thee, have left the avenues of the heart as free as ever to kindly and to generous affections, while they have barred them against those of fear, uncertainty, and all the caitiff tribe of meaner sensations. I have proffered to esteem thee, and I have no hesitation in proving it. I will tell thee,

if thou desirest to know it, the fate of that very Bertha, whose memory thou hast cherished in thy breast in spite of thee, amidst the toil of the day and the repose of the night, in the battle and in the truce, when sporting with thy companions in fields of exercise, or attempting to prosecute the study of Greek learning, in which if thou wouldst advance, I can teach it by a short road."

While Agelastes thus spoke, the Varangian in some degree recovered his composure, and made answer, though his voice was somewhat tremulous,—

"Who thou art, I know not—what thou wouldst with me, I cannot tell—by what means thou hast gathered intelligence of such consequence to me, and of so little to another, I have no conception—But this I know, that by intention or accident, thou hast pronounced a name which agitates my heart to its deepest recesses; yet am I a Christian and Varangian, and neither to my God nor to my adopted prince will I willingly stagger in my faith. What is to be wrought by idols or by false deities, must be a treason to the real divinity. Nor is it less certain that thou hast let glance some arrows, though the rules of thy allegiance strictly forbid it, at the Emperor himself. Henceforward, therefore, I refuse to communicate with thee, be it for weal or woe. I am the Emperor's waged soldier, and although I affect not the nice precisions of respect and obedience, which are exacted in so many various cases, and by so many various rules, yet I am his defence, and my battle-axe is his body-guard."

"No one doubts it," said the philosopher. "But art not thou also bound to a nearer dependence upon the great Acolyte, Achilles Tatius?"

"No. He is my general, according to the rules of our service," answered the Varangian; "to me he has always shown himself a kind and good-natured man, and, his dues of rank apart, I may say has deported himself as a friend rather than a commander. He is, however, my master's servant as well as I am; nor do I hold the difference of great amount, which the word of a man can give or take away at pleasure."

"It is nobly spoken," said Agelastes; "and you yourself are surely entitled to stand erect before one whom you supersede in courage and in the art of war."

"Pardon me," returned the Briton, "if I decline the attributed compliment, as what in no respect belongs to me. The Emperor chooses his own officers, in respect of their power of serving him as he desires to be served. In this it is likely I might fail; I have said already I owe my Emperor my obedience, my duty, and my service, nor does it seem to me necessary to carry our explanation farther."

"Singular man!" said Agelastes; "is there nothing that can move thee but things that are foreign to thyself? The name of thy Emperor and thy commander are no spell upon thee, and even that of the object thou hast loved"——

Here the Varangian interrupted him.

"I have thought," he said, "upon the words

thou hast spoken—thou hast found the means to shake my heart-strings, but not to unsettle my principles. I will hold no converse with thee on a matter in which thou canst not have interest. Necromancers, it is said, perform their spells by means of the epithets of the Holiest; no marvel, then, should they use the names of the purest of his creation to serve their unhallowed purposes. I will none of such truckling, disgraceful to the dead perhaps as to the living. Whatever has been thy purpose, old man—for, think not thy strange words have passed unnoticed—be thou assured I bear that in my heart which defies alike the seduction of men and of fiends."

With this the soldier turned, and left the ruined temple, after a slight inclination of his head to the philosopher.

Agelastes, after the departure of the soldier, remained alone, apparently absorbed in meditation, until he was suddenly disturbed by the entrance, into the ruins, of Achilles Tatius. The leader of the Varangians spoke not until he had time to form some result from the philosopher's features. He then said, "Thou remainest, sage Agelastes, confident in the purpose of which we have lately spoke together?"

"I do," said Agelastes, with gravity and firmness.

"But," replied Achilles Tatius, "thou hast not gained to our side that proselyte, whose coolness and courage would serve us better in our hour of

need than the service of a thousand cold-hearted slaves?"

"I have not succeeded," answered the philosopher.

"And thou dost not blush to own it?" said the imperial officer in reply. "Thou, the wisest of those who yet pretend to Grecian wisdom, the most powerful of those who still assert the skill by words, signs, names, periapts, and spells, to exceed the sphere to which thy faculties belong, hast been foiled in thy trade of persuasion, like an infant worsted in debate with its domestic tutor? Out upon thee, that thou canst not sustain in argument the character which thou wouldst so fain assume to thyself!"

"Peace!" said the Grecian. "I have as yet gained nothing, it is true, over this obstinate and inflexible man; but, Achilles Tatius, neither have I lost. We both stand where yesterday we did, with this advantage on my side, that I have suggested to him such an object of interest as he shall never be able to expel from his mind, until he hath had recourse to me to obtain farther knowledge concerning it.—And now let this singular person remain for a time unmentioned; yet trust me, though flattery, avarice, and ambition may fail to gain him, a bait nevertheless remains, that shall make him as completely our own as any that is bound within our mystic and inviolable contract. Tell me then, how go on the affairs of the empire? Does this tide of Latin warriors, so strangely set aflowing, still rush on to the banks of the Bospho-

rus? and does Alexius still entertain hopes to diminish and divide the strength of numbers, which he could in vain hope to defy?"

"Something further of intelligence has been gained, even within a very few hours," answered Achilles Tatius. "Bohemond came to the city with some six or eight light horse, and in a species of disguise. Considering how often he had been the Emperor's enemy, his project was a perilous one. But when is it that these Franks draw back on account of danger? The Emperor perceived at once that the Count was come to see what he might obtain, by presenting himself as the very first object of his liberality, and by offering his assistance as mediator with Godfrey of Bouillon and the other princes of the crusade."

"It is a species of policy," answered the sage, "for which he would receive full credit from the Emperor."

Achilles Tatius proceeded:—"Count Bohemond was discovered to the imperial court as if it were by mere accident, and he was welcomed with marks of favour and splendour which had never been even mentioned as being fit for any one of the Frankish race. There was no word of ancient enmity or of former wars, no mention of Bohemond as the ancient usurper of Antioch, and the encroacher upon the empire. But thanks to Heaven were returned on all sides, which had sent a faithful ally to the imperial assistance at a moment of such imminent peril."

"And what said Bohemond?" enquired the philosopher.

"Little or nothing," said the captain of the Varangians, "until, as I learned from the domestic slave Narses, a large sum of gold had been abandoned to him. Considerable districts were afterwards agreed to be ceded to him, and other advantages granted, on condition he should stand on this occasion the steady friend of the empire and its master. Such was the Emperor's munificence towards the greedy barbarian, that a chamber in the palace was, by chance, as it were, left exposed to his view, containing large quantities of manufactured silks, of jewellers' work, of gold and silver, and other articles of great value. When the rapacious Frank could not forbear some expressions of admiration, he was assured, that the contents of the treasure-chamber were his own, provided he valued them as showing forth the warmth and sincerity of his imperial ally towards his friends;—and these precious articles were accordingly conveyed to the tent of the Norman leader. By such measures, the Emperor must make himself master of Bohemond, both body and soul, for the Franks themselves say it is strange to see a man of undaunted bravery, and towering ambition, so infected, nevertheless, with avarice, which they term a mean and unnatural vice."

"Bohemond," said Agelastes, "is then the Emperor's for life and death—always, that is, till the recollection of the royal munificence be effaced by a greater gratuity. Alexius, proud as he naturally

is of his management with this important chieftain, will no doubt expect to prevail by his counsels, on most of the other crusaders, and even on Godfrey of Bouillon himself, to take an oath of submission and fidelity to the Emperor, which, were it not for the sacred nature of their warfare, the meanest gentleman among them would not submit to, were it to be lord of a province. There, then, we rest. A few days must determine what we have to do. An earlier discovery would be destruction."

"We meet not then to-night?" said the Acolyte.

"No," replied the sage; "unless we are summoned to that foolish stage-play or recitation; and then we meet as playthings in the hand of a silly woman, the spoiled child of a weak-minded parent."

Tatius then took his leave of the philosopher, and, as if fearful of being seen in each other's company, they left their solitary place of meeting by different routes. The Varangian, Hereward, received, shortly after, a summons from his superior, who acquainted him that he should not, as formerly intimated, require his attendance that evening.

Achilles then paused, and added,—"Thou hast something on thy lips thou wouldst say to me, which, nevertheless, hesitates to break forth."

"It is only this," answered the soldier: "I have had an interview with the man called Agelastes, and he seems something so different from what he appeared when we last spoke of him, that I cannot forbear mentioning to you what I have seen. He is not an insignificant trifler, whose object it is to

raise a laugh at his own expense, or that of any other. He is a deep-thinking and far-reaching man, who, for some reason or other, is desirous of forming friends, and drawing a party to himself. Your own wisdom will teach you to beware of him."

"Thou art an honest fellow, my poor Hereward," said Achilles Tatius, with an affectation of good-natured contempt. "Such men as Agelastes do often frame their severest jests in the shape of formal gravity—they will pretend to possess the most unbounded power over elements and elemental spirits—they will make themselves masters of the names and anecdotes best known to those whom they make their sport; and any one who shall listen to them, shall, in the words of the divine Homer, only expose himself to a flood of inextinguishable laughter. I have often known him select one of the rawest and most ignorant persons in presence, and to him, for the amusement of the rest, he has pretended to cause the absent to appear, the distant to draw near, and the dead themselves to burst the cerements of the grave. Take care, Hereward, that his arts make not a stain on the credit of one of my bravest Varangians."

"There is no danger," answered Hereward. "I shall not be fond of being often with this man. If he jests upon one subject which he hath mentioned to me, I shall be but too likely to teach him seriousness after a rough manner. And if he is serious in his pretensions in such mystical matters, we should, according to the faith of my grandfather,

Kenelm, do insult to the deceased, whose name is taken in the mouth of a soothsayer, or impious enchanter. I will not, therefore, again go near this Agelastes, be he wizard, or be he impostor."

"You apprehend me not," said the Acolyte, hastily; "you mistake my meaning. He is a man from whom, if he pleases to converse with such as you, you may derive much knowledge; keeping out of the reach of those pretended secret arts, which he will only use to turn thee into ridicule." With these words, which he himself would perhaps have felt it difficult to reconcile, the leader and his follower parted.

CHAPTER IX.

Between the foaming jaws of the white torrent,
The skilful artist draws a sudden mound;
By level long he subdivides their strength,
Stealing the waters from their rocky bed,
First to diminish what he means to conquer;
Then, for the residue he forms a road,
Easy to keep, and painful to desert,
And guiding to the end the planner aim'd at.
The Engineer.

It would have been easy for Alexius, by a course of avowed suspicion, or any false step in the manner of receiving this tumultuary invasion of the European nations, to have blown into a flame the numerous but smothered grievances under which they laboured; and a similar catastrophe would not have been less certain, had he at once abandoned all thoughts of resistance, and placed his hope of safety in surrendering to the multitudes of the west whatsoever they accounted worth taking. The Emperor chose a middle course; and, unquestionably, in the weakness of the Greek empire, it was the only one which would have given him at once safety, and a great degree of consequence in the eyes of the Frank invaders, and those of his own subjects. The means with which he acted were of various kinds, and, rather from policy than incli-

nation, were often stained with falsehood or meanness; therefore it follows, that the measures of the Emperor resembled those of the snake, who twines himself through the grass, with the purpose of stinging insidiously those whom he fears to approach with the step of the bold and generous lion. We are not, however, writing the History of the Crusades, and what we have already said of the Emperor's precautions on the first appearance of Godfrey of Bouillon, and his associates, may suffice for the elucidation of our story.

About four weeks had now passed over, marked by quarrels and reconcilements between the crusaders and the Grecians of the empire. The former were, as Alexius's policy dictated, occasionally and individually received with extreme honour, and their leaders loaded with respect and favour; while, from time to time, such bodies of them as sought distant or circuitous routes to the capital, were intercepted and cut to pieces by light-armed troops, who easily passed upon their ignorant opponents for Turks, Scythians, or other infidels, and sometimes were actually such, but in the service of the Grecian monarch. Often, too, it happened, that while the more powerful chiefs of the crusade were feasted by the Emperor and his ministers with the richest delicacies, and their thirst slaked with iced wines, their followers were left at a distance, where, intentionally supplied with adulterated flour, tainted provisions, and bad water, they contracted diseases, and died in great numbers, without having once seen a foot of the

Holy Land, for the recovery of which they had abandoned their peace, their competence, and their native country. These aggressions did not pass without complaint. Many of the crusading chiefs impugned the fidelity of their allies, exposed the losses sustained by their armies as evils voluntarily inflicted on them by the Greeks, and on more than one occasion, the two nations stood opposed to each other on such terms that a general war seemed to be inevitable.

Alexius, however, though obliged to have recourse to every finesse, still kept his ground, and made peace with the most powerful chiefs, under one pretence or other. The actual losses of the crusaders by the sword he imputed to their own aggressions—their misguidance, to accident and to wilfulness—the effects produced on them by the adulterated provisions, to the vehemence of their own appetite for raw fruits and unripened wines. In short, there was no disaster of any kind whatsoever which could possibly befall the unhappy pilgrims, but the Emperor stood prepared to prove that it was the natural consequence of their own violence, wilfulness of conduct, or hostile precipitancy.

The chiefs, who were not ignorant of their strength, would not, it was likely, have tamely suffered injuries from a power so inferior to their own, were it not that they had formed extravagant ideas of the wealth of the Eastern empire, which Alexius seemed willing to share with them with an excess of bounty as new to the leaders as the

rich productions of the East were tempting to their followers.

The French nobles would perhaps have been the most difficult to be brought into order when differences arose, but an accident, which the Emperor might have termed providential, reduced the high-spirited Count of Vermandois to the situation of a suppliant, when he expected to hold that of a dictator. A fierce tempest surprised his fleet after he set sail from Italy, and he was finally driven on the coast of Greece. Many ships were destroyed, and those troops who got ashore were so much distressed, that they were obliged to surrender themselves to the lieutenants of Alexius. So that the Count of Vermandois, so haughty in his bearing when he first embarked, was sent to the court of Constantinople, not as a prince, but as a prisoner. In this case, the Emperor instantly set the soldiers at liberty, and loaded them with presents.*

Grateful, therefore, for attentions in which Alexius was unremitting, Count Hugh was, by gratitude as well as interest, inclined to join the opinion of those who, for other reasons, desired the subsistence of peace betwixt the crusaders and the empire of Greece. A better principle determined the celebrated Godfrey, Raymond of Thoulouse, and some others, in whom devotion was something more than a mere burst of fanaticism. These princes considered with what scandal their whole journey must be stained, if the first of their

* See Mills' History of the Crusades, vol. I. p. 96.

exploits should be a war upon the Grecian empire, which might justly be called the barrier of Christendom. If it was weak, and at the same time rich —if at the same time it invited rapine, and was unable to protect itself against it—it was the more their interest and duty, as Christian soldiers, to protect a Christian state, whose existence was of so much consequence to the common cause, even when it could not defend itself. It was the wish of these frank-hearted men to receive the Emperor's professions of friendship with such sincere returns of amity—to return his kindness with so much usury, as to convince him that their purpose towards him was in every respect fair and honourable, and that it would be his interest to abstain from every injurious treatment which might induce or compel them to alter their measures towards him.

It was with this accommodating spirit towards Alexius, which, for many different and complicated reasons, had now animated most of the crusaders, that the chiefs consented to a measure which, in other circumstances, they would probably have refused, as undue to the Greeks, and dishonourable to themselves. This was the famous resolution, that, before crossing the Bosphorus to go in quest of that Palestine which they had vowed to regain, each chief of crusaders would acknowledge individually the Grecian Emperor, originally lord paramount of all these regions, as their liege lord and suzerain.

The Emperor Alexius, with trembling joy, be-

held the crusaders approach a conclusion to which he had hoped to bribe them rather by interested means than by reasoning, although much might be said why provinces reconquered from the Turks or Saracens should, if recovered from the infidel, become again a part of the Grecian empire, from which they had been rent without any pretence, save that of violence.

Though fearful, and almost despairing of being able to manage the rude and discordant army of haughty chiefs, who were wholly independent of each other, Alexius failed not, with eagerness and dexterity, to seize upon the admission of Godfrey and his compeers, that the Emperor was entitled to the allegiance of all who should war on Palestine, and natural lord paramount of all the conquests which should be made in the course of the expedition. He was resolved to make this ceremony so public, and to interest men's minds in it by such a display of the imperial pomp and munificence, that it should not either pass unknown, or be readily forgotten.

An extensive terrace, one of the numerous spaces which extend along the coast of the Propontis, was chosen for the site of the magnificent ceremony. Here was placed an elevated and august throne, calculated for the use of the Emperor alone. On this occasion, by suffering no other seats within view of the pageant, the Greeks endeavoured to secure a point of ceremony peculiarly dear to their vanity, namely, that none of that presence, save the Emperor himself, should be seated. Around

the throne of Alexius Comnenus were placed in order, but standing, the various dignitaries of his splendid court, in their different ranks, from the Protosebastos and the Cæsar, to the Patriarch, splendid in his ecclesiastic robes, and to Agelastes, who, in his simple habit, gave also the necessary attendance. Behind and around the splendid display of the Emperor's court, were drawn many dark circles of the exiled Anglo-Saxons. These, by their own desire, were not, on that memorable day, accoutred in the silver corslets which were the fashion of an idle court, but sheathed in mail and plate. They desired, they said, to be known as warriors to warriors. This was the more readily granted, as there was no knowing what trifle might infringe a truce between parties so inflammable as were now assembled.

Beyond the Varangians, in much greater numbers, were drawn up the bands of Grecians, or Romans, then known by the title of Immortals, which had been borrowed by the Romans originally from the empire of Persia. The stately forms, lofty crests, and splendid apparel of these guards, would have given the foreign princes present a higher idea of their military prowess, had there not occurred in their ranks a frequent indication of loquacity and of motion, forming a strong contrast to the steady composure and death-like silence with which the well-trained Varangians stood in the parade, like statues made of iron.

The reader must then conceive this throne in all the pomp of Oriental greatness, surrounded by the

foreign and Roman troops of the empire, and closed on the rear by clouds of light-horse, who shifted their places repeatedly, so as to convey an idea of their multitude, without affording the exact means of estimating it. Through the dust which they raised by these evolutions, might be seen banners and standards, among which could be discovered, by glances, the celebrated LABARUM,* the pledge of conquest to the imperial banners, but whose sacred efficacy had somewhat failed of late days. The rude soldiers of the West, who viewed the Grecian army, maintained that the standards which were exhibited in front of their line, were at least sufficient for the array of ten times the number of soldiers.

Far on the right, the appearance of a very large body of European cavalry drawn up on the seashore, intimated the presence of the crusaders. So great was the desire to follow the example of the chief Princes, Dukes, and Counts, in making the proposed fealty, that the number of independent knights and nobles, who were to perform this service, seemed very great when collected together for that purpose; for every crusader who possessed a tower, and led six lances, would have thought himself abridged of his dignity if he had not been called to acknowledge the Grecian Emperor, and hold the lands he should conquer of his throne, as well as Godfrey of Bouillon, or Hugh the Great, Count of Vermandois. And yet, with strange in-

* Note I., p. 216.—Labarum.

consistency, though they pressed to fulfil the homage as that which was paid by greater persons than themselves, they seemed, at the very same time, desirous to find some mode of intimating that the homage which they rendered they felt as an idle degradation, and in fact held the whole show as a mere piece of mockery.

The order of the procession had been thus settled:—The Crusaders, or, as the Grecians called them, the *Counts*,—that being the most common title among them,—were to advance from the left of their body, and passing the Emperor one by one, were apprised, that, in passing, each was to render to him, in as few words as possible, the homage which had been previously agreed on. Godfrey of Bouillon, his brother Baldwin, Bohemond of Antioch, and several other crusaders of eminence, were the first to perform the ceremony, alighting when their own part was performed, and remaining in attendance by the Emperor's chair, to prevent, by the awe of their presence, any of their numerous associates from being guilty of petulance or presumption during the solemnity. Other crusaders of less degree retained their station near the Emperor, when they had once gained it, out of mere curiosity, or to show that they were as much at liberty to do so as the greater commanders who assumed that privilege.

Thus two great bodies of troops, Grecian and European, paused at some distance from each other on the banks of the Bosphorus canal, differing in language, arms, and appearance. The small troops

of horse, which from time to time issued forth from these bodies, resembled the flashes of lightning passing from one thunder-cloud to another, which communicate to each other by such emissaries their overcharged contents. After some halt on the margin of the Bosphorus, the Franks who had performed homage, straggled irregularly forward to a quay on the shore, where innumerable galleys and smaller vessels, provided for the purpose, lay with sails and oars prepared to waft the warlike pilgrims across the passage, and place them on that Asia which they longed so passionately to visit, and from which but few of them were likely to return. The gay appearance of the vessels which were to receive them, the readiness with which they were supplied with refreshments, the narrowness of the strait they had to cross, the near approach of that active service which they had vowed and longed to discharge, put the wariors into gay spirits, and songs and music bore chorus to the departing oars.

While such was the temper of the crusaders, the Grecian Emperor did his best through the whole ceremonial to impress on the armed multitude the highest ideas of his own grandeur, and the importance of the occasion which had brought them together. This was readily admitted by the higher chiefs; some because their vanity had been propitiated,—some because their avarice had been gratified,—some because their ambition had been inflamed,—and a few, a very few, because to remain friends with Alexius was the most probable means of advancing the purposes of their expedition. Ac-

cordingly, the great lords, from these various motives, practised a humility which perhaps they were far from feeling, and carefully abstained from all which might seem like irreverence at the solemn festival of the Grecians. But there were very many of a different temper.

Of the great number of counts, lords, and knights, under whose variety of banners the crusaders were led to the walls of Constantinople, many were too insignificant to be bribed to this distasteful measure of homage; and these, though they felt it dangerous to oppose resistance, yet mixed their submission with taunts, ridicule, and such contraventions of decorum, as plainly intimated that they entertained resentment and scorn at the step they were about to take, and esteemed it as proclaiming themselves vassals to a prince, heretic in his faith, limited in the exercise of his boasted power, their enemy when he dared show himself such, and the friend of those only among their number who were able to compel him to be so; and who, though to them an obsequious ally, was to the others, when occasion offered, an insidious and murderous enemy.

The nobles of Frankish origin and descent were chiefly remarkable for their presumptuous contempt of every other nation engaged in the crusade, as well as for their dauntless bravery, and for the scorn with which they regarded the power and authority of the Greek empire. It was a common saying among them, that if the skies should fall, the French crusaders alone were able to hold them up with their lances. The same bold and arrogant disposi-

tion showed itself in occasional quarrels with their unwilling hosts, in which the Greeks, notwithstanding all their art, were often worsted; so that Alexius was determined, at all events, to get rid of these intractable and fiery allies, by ferrying them over the Bosphorus with all manner of diligence. To do this with safety, he availed himself of the presence of the Count of Vermandois, Godfrey of Bouillon, and other chiefs of great influence, to keep in order the lesser Frankish knights, who were so numerous and unruly.*

Struggling with his feelings of offended pride, tempered by a prudent degree of apprehension, the Emperor endeavoured to receive with complacence a homage tendered in mockery. An incident shortly took place of a character highly descriptive of the nations brought together in so extraordinary a manner, and with such different feelings and sentiments. Several bands of French had passed, in a sort of procession, the throne of the Emperor, and rendered, with some appearance of gravity, the usual homage. On this occasion they bent their knees to Alexius, placed their hands within his, and in that posture paid the ceremonies of feudal fealty. But when it came to the turn of Bohemond of Antioch, already mentioned, to render this fealty, the Emperor, desirous to show every species of honour to this wily person, his former enemy, and now apparently his ally, advanced two or three paces towards the sea-

* See Mills, vol. I. chap. 3.

side, where the boats lay as if in readiness for his use.

The distance to which the Emperor moved was very small, and it was assumed as a piece of deference to Bohemond; but it became the means of exposing Alexius himself to a cutting affront, which his guards and subjects felt deeply, as an intentional humiliation. A half score of horsemen, attendants of the Frankish Count who was next to perform the homage, with their lord at their head, set off at full gallop from the right flank of the French squadrons, and arriving before the throne, which was yet empty, they at once halted. The rider at the head of the band was a strong herculean figure, with a decided and stern countenance, though extremely handsome, looking out from thick black curls. His head was surmounted with a barret cap, while his hands, limbs, and feet were covered with garments of chamois leather, over which he in general wore the ponderous and complete armour of his country. This, however, he had laid aside for personal convenience, though in doing so he evinced a total neglect of the ceremonial which marked so important a meeting. He waited not a moment for the Emperor's return, nor regarded the impropriety of obliging Alexius to hurry his steps back to his throne, but sprung from his gigantic horse, and threw the reins loose, which were instantly seized by one of the attendant pages. Without a moment's hesitation the Frank seated himself in the vacant throne of the Emperor, and extending his half-armed and robust figure on the

golden cushions which were destined for Alexius, he indolently began to caress a large wolf-hound which had followed him, and which, feeling itself as much at ease as its master, reposed its grim form on the carpets of silk and gold damask, which tapestried the imperial footstool. The very hound stretched itself with a bold, ferocious insolence, and seemed to regard no one with respect, save the stern knight whom it called master.

The Emperor, turning back from the short space which, as a special mark of favour, he had accompanied Bohemond, beheld with astonishment his seat occupied by this insolent Frank. The bands of the half savage Varangians who were stationed around, would not have hesitated an instant in avenging the insult, by prostrating the violator of their master's throne even in this act of his contempt, had they not been restrained by Achilles Tatius and other officers, who were uncertain what the Emperor would do, and somewhat timorous of taking a resolution for themselves.

Meanwhile, the unceremonious knight spoke aloud, in a speech which, though provincial, might be understood by all to whom the French language was known, while even those who understood it not, gathered its interpretation from his tone and manner. "What churl is this," he said, "who has remained sitting stationary like a block of wood, or the fragment of a rock, when so many noble knights, the flower of chivalry and muster of gallantry, stand uncovered around, among the thrice conquered Varangians?"

A deep, clear accent replied, as if from the bottom of the earth, so like it was to the accents of some being from the other world,—"If the Normans desire battle of the Varangians, they will meet them in the lists man to man, without the poor boast of insulting the Emperor of Greece, who is well known to fight only by the battle-axes of his guard."

The astonishment was so great when this answer was heard, as to affect even the knight, whose insult upon the Emperor had occasioned it; and amid the efforts of Achilles to retain his soldiers within the bounds of subordination and silence, a loud murmur seemed to intimate that they would not long remain so. Bohemond returned through the press with a celerity which did not so well suit the dignity of Alexius, and catching the crusader by the arm, he, something between fair means and a gentle degree of force, obliged him to leave the chair of the Emperor, in which he had placed himself so boldly.

"How is it," said Bohemond, "noble Count of Paris? Is there one of this great assembly who can see with patience, that your name, so widely renowned for valour, is now to be quoted in an idle brawl with hirelings, whose utmost boast it is to bear a mercenary battle-axe in the ranks of the Emperor's guards? For shame—for shame—do not, for the discredit of Norman chivalry, let it be so!"

"I know not," said the crusader, rising reluctantly—"I am not nice in choosing the degree of my adversary, when he bears himself like one who

is willing and forward in battle. I am good-natured, I tell thee, Count Bohemond; and Turk or Tartar, or wandering Anglo-Saxon, who only escapes from the chain of the Normans to become the slave of the Greek, is equally welcome to whet his blade clean against my armour, if he desires to achieve such an honourable office."

The Emperor had heard what passed—had heard it with indignation, mixed with fear; for he imagined the whole scheme of his policy was about to be overturned at once by a premeditated plan of personal affront, and probably an assault upon his person. He was about to call to arms, when, casting his eyes on the right flank of the crusaders, he saw that all remained quiet after the Frank Baron had transferred himself from thence. He therefore instantly resolved to let the insult pass, as one of the rough pleasantries of the Franks, since the advance of more troops did not give any symptom of an actual onset.

Resolving on his line of conduct with the quickness of thought, he glided back to his canopy, and stood beside his throne, of which, however, he chose not instantly to take possession, least he should give the insolent stranger some ground for renewing and persisting in a competition for it.

"What bold Vavasour is this," said he to Count Baldwin, "whom, as is apparent from his dignity, I ought to have received seated upon my throne, and who thinks proper thus to vindicate his rank?"

"He is reckoned one of the bravest men in our host," answered Baldwin, "though the brave are

as numerous there as the sands of the sea. He will himself tell you his name and rank."

Alexius looked at the Vavasour. He saw nothing in his large, well-formed features, lighted by a wild touch of enthusiasm which spoke in his quick eye, that intimated premeditated insult, and was induced to suppose that what had occurred, so contrary to the form and ceremonial of the Grecian court, was neither an intentional affront, nor designed as the means of introducing a quarrel. He therefore spoke with comparative ease, when he addressed the stranger thus:—"We know not by what dignified name to salute you; but we are aware, from Count Baldwin's information, that we are honoured in having in our presence one of the bravest knights whom a sense of the wrongs done to the Holy Land has brought thus far on his way to Palestine, to free it from its bondage."

"If you mean to ask my name," answered the European knight, "any one of these pilgrims can readily satisfy you, and more gracefully than I can myself; since we use to say in our country, that many a fierce quarrel is prevented from being fought out by an untimely disclosure of names, when men, who might have fought with the fear of God before their eyes, must, when their names are manifested, recognise each other as spiritual allies, by baptism, gossipred, or some such irresistible bond of friendship; whereas, had they fought first, and told their names afterwards, they could have had some assurance of each other's va-

lour, and have been able to view their relationship as an honour to both."

"Still," said the Emperor, "methinks I would know if you, who, in this extraordinary press of knights, seem to assert a precedence to yourself, claim the dignity due to a king or prince?"

"How speak you that?" said the Frank, with a brow somewhat overclouded; "do you feel that I have not left you unjostled by my advance to these squadrons of yours?"

Alexius hastened to answer, that he felt no particular desire to connect the Count with an affront or offence; observing, that in the extreme necessity of the Empire, it was no time for him, who was at the helm, to engage in idle or unnecessary quarrels.

The Frankish knight heard him, and answered drily—"Since such are your sentiments, I wonder that you have ever resided long enough within the hearing of the French language to learn to speak it as you do. I would have thought some of the sentiments of the chivalry of the nation, since you are neither a monk nor a woman, would, at the same time with the words of the dialect, have found their way into your heart."

"Hush, Sir Count," said Bohemond, who remained by the Emperor to avert the threatening quarrel. "It is surely requisite to answer the Emperor with civility; and those who are impatient for warfare, will have infidels enough to wage it with. He only demanded your name and line-

age, which you of all men can have least objection to disclose."

"I know not if it will interest this Prince, or Emperor as you term him," answered the Frank Count; "but all the account I can give of myself is this: In the midst of one of the vast forests which occupy the centre of France, my native country, there stands a chapel, sunk so low into the ground, that it seems as if it were become decrepid by its own great age. The image of the Holy Virgin who presides over its altar, is called by all men our Lady of the Broken Lances, and is accounted through the whole kingdom the most celebrated for military adventures. Four beaten roads, each leading from an opposite point in the compass, meet before the principal door of the chapel; and ever and anon, as a good knight arrives at this place, he passes in to the performance of his devotions in the chapel, having first sounded his horn three times, till ash and oak-tree quiver and ring. Having then kneeled down to his devotions, he seldom arises from the mass of Her of the Broken Lances, but there is attending on his leisure some adventurous knight ready to satisfy the new comer's desire of battle. This station have I held for a month and more against all comers, and all gave me fair thanks for the knightly manner of quitting myself towards them, except one, who had the evil hap to fall from his horse, and did break his neck; and another, who was struck through the body, so that the lance came out behind his back about a cloth-yard, all

dripping with blood. Allowing for such accidents, which cannot easily be avoided, my opponents parted with me with fair acknowledgment of the grace I had done them."

"I conceive, Sir Knight," said the Emperor, "that a form like yours, animated by the courage you display, is likely to find few equals even among your adventurous countrymen; far less among men who are taught that to cast away their lives in a senseless quarrel among themselves, is to throw away, like a boy, the gift of Providence."

"You are welcome to your opinion," said the Frank, somewhat contemptuously; "yet I assure you, if you doubt that our gallant strife was unmixed with sullenness and anger, and that we hunt not the hart or the boar with merrier hearts in the evening, than we discharge our task of chivalry by the morn had arisen, before the portal of the old chapel, you do us foul injustice."

"With the Turks you will not enjoy this amiable exchange of courtesies," answered Alexius. "Wherefore I would advise you neither to stray far into the van nor into the rear, but to abide by the standard where the best infidels make their efforts, and the best knights are required to repel them."

"By our Lady of the Broken Lances," said the Crusader, "I would not that the Turks were more courteous than they are Christian, and am well pleased that unbeliever and heathen hound are a proper description for the best of them, as being traitor alike to their God and to the laws of chi-

valry; and devoutly do I trust that I shall meet with them in the front rank of our army, beside our standard, or elsewhere, and have an open field to do my devoir against them, both as the enemies of Our Lady and the holy saints, and as, by their evil customs, more expressly my own. Meanwhile you have time to seat yourself and receive my homage, and I will be bound to you for despatching this foolish ceremony with as little waste and delay of time as the occasion will permit."

The Emperor hastily seated himself, and received into his the sinewy hands of the Crusader, who made the acknowledgment of his homage, and was then guided off by Count Baldwin, who walked with the stranger to the ships, and then, apparently well pleased at seeing him in the course of going on board, returned back to the side of the Emperor.

"What is the name," said the Emperor, "of that singular and assuming man?"

"It is Robert, Count of Paris," answered Baldwin, "accounted one of the bravest peers who stands around the throne of France."

After a moment's recollection, Alexius Comnenus issued orders, that the ceremonial of the day should be discontinued, afraid, perhaps, lest the rough and careless humour of the strangers should produce some new quarrel. The crusaders were led, nothing loath, back to palaces in which they had already been hospitably received, and readily resumed the interrupted feast, from which they had been called to pay their homage. The trum-

pets of the various leaders blew the recall of the few troops of an ordinary character who were attendant, together with the host of knights and leaders, who, pleased with the indulgences provided for them, and obscurely foreseeing that the passage of the Bosphorus would be the commencement of their actual suffering, rejoiced in being called to the hither side.

It was not probably intended; but the hero, as he might be styled, of the tumultuous day, Count Robert of Paris, who was already on his road to embarkation on the strait, was disturbed in his purpose by the sound of recall which was echoed around; nor could Bohemond, Godfrey, or any who took upon him to explain the signal, alter his resolution of returning to Constantinople. He laughed to scorn the threatened displeasure of the Emperor, and seemed to think there would be a peculiar pleasure in braving Alexius at his own board, or, at least, that nothing could be more indifferent than whether he gave offence or not.

To Godfrey of Bouillon, to whom he showed some respect, he was still far from paying deference; and that sagacious prince, having used every argument which might shake his purpose of returning to the imperial city, to the very point of making it a quarrel with him in person, at length abandoned him to his own discretion, and pointed him out to the Count of Tholouse, as he passed, as a wild knight-errant, incapable of being influenced by any thing save his own wayward fancy. "He brings not five hundred men to the crusade," said

Godfrey; "and I dare be sworn, that even in this, the very outset of the undertaking, he knows not where these five hundred men are, and how their wants are provided for. There is an eternal trumpet in his ear sounding to assault, nor has he room or time to hear a milder or more rational signal. See how he strolls along yonder, the very emblem of an idle schoolboy, broke out of the school-bounds upon a holyday, half animated by curiosity and half by love of mischief."

"And," said Raymond, Count of Tholouse, "with resolution sufficient to support the desperate purpose of the whole army of devoted crusaders. And yet so passionate a Rodomont is Count Robert, that he would rather risk the success of the whole expedition, than omit an opportunity of meeting a worthy antagonist *en champ clos*, or lose, as he terms it, a chance of worshipping our Lady of the Broken Lances. Who are yon with whom he has now met, and who are apparently walking, or rather strolling, in the same way with him, back to Constantinople?"

"An armed knight, brilliantly equipped—yet of something less than knightly stature," answered Godfrey. "It is, I suppose, the celebrated lady who won Robert's heart in the lists of battle, by bravery and valour equal to his own; and the pilgrim form in the long vestments may be their daughter or niece."

"A singular spectacle, worthy Knight," said the Count of Tholouse, "do our days present to us, to which we have had nothing similar, since

Gaita,* wife of Robert Guiscard, first took upon her to distinguish herself by manly deeds of emprise, and rival her husband, as well in the front of battle as at the dancing-room or banquet."

"Such is the custom of this pair, most noble knight," answered another Crusader, who had joined them, "and Heaven pity the poor man who has no power to keep domestic peace by an appeal to the stronger hand!"

"Well," replied Raymond, "if it be rather a mortifying reflection, that the lady of our love is far past the bloom of youth, it is a consolation that she is too old-fashioned to beat us, when we return back with no more of youth or manhood than a long crusade has left. But come, follow on the road to Constantinople, and in the rear of this most doughty knight."

* Note II., p. 216.—Gaita.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IX.

Note I., p. 199.—Labarum.

Ducange fills half a column of his huge page with the mere names of the authors who have written at length on the *Labarum*, or principal standard of the empire for the time of Constantine. It consisted of a spear of silver, or plated with that metal, having suspended from a cross beam below the spoke a small square silken banner, adorned with portraits of the reigning family, and over these the famous Monogram which expresses at once the figure of the cross and the initial letters of the name of Christ. The bearer of the *Labarum* was an officer of high rank down to the last days of the Byzantine government.—See Gibbon, chap. 20.

Ducange seems to have proved, from the evidence of coins and triumphal monuments, that a standard of the form of the *Labarum* was used by various barbarous nations long before it was adopted by their Roman conquerors, and he is of opinion that its name also was borrowed from either Teutonic Germany, or Celtic Gaul, or Sclavonic Illyria. It is certain that either the German language or the Welsh may afford at this day a perfectly satisfactory etymon: *Lap-heer* in the former, and *Lab-hair* in the latter, having precisely the same meaning—*the cloth of the host.*

The form of the *Labarum* may still be recognised in the banners carried in ecclesiastical processions, in all Roman Catholic countries.

Note II., p. 215.—Gaita.

This Amazon makes a conspicuous figure in Anna Comnena's account of her father's campaigns against Robert Guiscard. On one occasion (Alexiad, lib. iv. p. 93) she represents

her as thus recalling the fugitive soldiery of her husband to their duty,—Ἡ δε γε Γαιτα Παλλας ἀλλη, κἂν μη Ἀθηνη, κατ' αυτων μιγιστην ἀφεισα φωνην, μονον ὰ το Ὁμηρικον ἑπος τῃ ἰδιᾳ διαλεκτῳ λεγειν ἐωκει. Μεχρι ποσου φευξεσθε; στητε, ἀνερες ἐστε. Ὡς δε ἐστι φευγοντας τυπτες ἐωρα, δορυ μακρον ἐναγκαλισαμενη, ὁλης ρυτηρας ἐνδυσα κατα των φευγοντων ἱσται.—That is, exhorting them, in all but Homeric language, at the top of her voice; and when this failed, brandishing a long spear, and rushing upon the fugitives at the utmost speed of her horse.

This heroic lady, according to the *Chronique Scandaleuse* of those days, was afterwards deluded by some cunning overtures of the Greek Emperor, and poisoned her husband in expectation of gaining a place on the throne of Constantinople. Ducange, however, rejects the story, and so does Gibbon.

CHAPTER X.

These were wild times—the antipodes of ours:
Ladies were there, who oftener saw themselves
In the broad lustre of a foeman's shield
Than in a mirror, and who rather sought
To match themselves in battle, than in dalliance
To meet a lover's onset.—But though Nature
Was outraged thus, she was not overcome.
Feudal Times.

BRENHILDA, Countess of Paris, was one of those stalwart dames who willingly hazarded themselves in the front of battle, which, during the first crusade, was as common as it was possible for a very unnatural custom to be, and, in fact, gave the real instances of the Marphisas and Bradamantes, whom the writers of romance delighted to paint, assigning them sometimes the advantage of invulnerable armour, or a spear whose thrust did not admit of being resisted, in order to soften the improbability of the weaker sex being frequently victorious over the male part of the creation.

But the spell of Brenhilda was of a more simple nature, and rested chiefly in her great beauty.

From a girl, she despised the pursuits of her sex; and they who ventured to become suitors for the hand of the young Lady of Aspramonte, to which

warlike fief she had succeeded, and which perhaps encouraged her in her fancy, received for answer, that they must first merit it by their good behaviour in the lists. The father of Brenhilda was dead; her mother was of a gentle temper, and easily kept under management by the young lady herself.

Brenhilda's numerous suitors readily agreed to terms which were too much according to the manners of the age to be disputed. A tournament was held at the Castle of Aspramonte, in which one half of the gallant assembly rolled headlong before their successful rivals, and withdrew from the lists mortified and disappointed. The successful party among the suitors were expected to be summoned to joust among themselves. But they were surprised at being made acquainted with the lady's further will. She aspired to wear armour herself, to wield a lance, and back a steed, and prayed the knights that they would permit a lady, whom they professed to honour so highly, to mingle in their games of chivalry. The young knights courteously received their young mistress in the lists, and smiled at the idea of her holding them triumphantly against so many gallant champions of the other sex. But the vassals and old servants of the Count, her father, smiled to each other, and intimated a different result than the gallants anticipated. The knights who encountered the fair Brenhilda were one by one stretched on the sand; nor was it to be denied, that the situation of tilting with one of the handsomest women of the time, was an extremely embarrassing one. Each youth was bent to withhold his charge in full

volley, to cause his steed to swerve at the full shock, or in some other way to flinch from doing the utmost which was necessary to gain the victory, lest, in so gaining it, he might cause irreparable injury to the beautiful opponent he tilted with. But the Lady of Aspramonte was not one who could be conquered by less than the exertion of the whole strength and talents of the victor. The defeated suitors departed from the lists the more mortified at their discomfiture, because Robert of Paris arrived at sunset, and, understanding what was going forward, sent his name to the barriers, as that of a knight who would willingly forego the reward of the tournament, in case he had the fortune to gain it, declaring, that neither lands nor ladies' charms were what he came thither to seek. Brenhilda, piqued and mortified, chose a new lance, mounted her best steed, and advanced into the lists as one determined to avenge upon the new assailant's brow the slight of her charms which he seemed to express. But whether her displeasure had somewhat interfered with her usual skill, or whether she had, like others of her sex, felt a partiality towards one whose heart was not particularly set upon gaining hers—or whether, as is often said on such occasions, her fated hour was come, so it was that Count Robert tilted with his usual address and good fortune. Brenhilda of Aspramonte was unhorsed and unhelmed, and stretched on the earth, and the beautiful face, which faded from very red to deadly pale before the eyes of the victor, produced its natural effect in raising the value of his

conquest. He would, in conformity with his resolution, have left the castle, after having mortified the vanity of the lady; but her mother opportunely interposed; and when she had satisfied herself that no serious injury had been sustained by the young heiress, she returned her thanks to the stranger knight who had taught her daughter a lesson, which, she trusted, she would not easily forget. Thus tempted to do what he secretly wished, Count Robert gave ear to those sentiments, which naturally whispered to him to be in no hurry to withdraw.

He was of the blood of Charlemagne, and, what was still of more consequence in the young lady's eyes, one of the most renowned of Norman knights in that jousting day. After a residence of ten days in the castle of Aspramonte, the bride and bridegroom set out, for such was Count Robert's will, with a competent train, to Our Lady of the Broken Lances, where it pleased him to be wedded. Two knights, who were waiting to do battle, as was the custom of the place, were rather disappointed at the nature of the cavalcade, which seemed to interrupt their purpose. But greatly were they surprised when they received a cartel from the betrothed couple, offering to substitute their own persons in the room of other antagonists, and congratulating themselves in commencing their married life in a manner so consistent with that which they had hitherto led. They were victorious as usual; and the only persons having occasion to rue the complaisance of the Count and his bride, were the

two strangers, one of whom broke an arm in the rencontre, and the other dislocated a collar bone.

Count Robert's course of knight-errantry did not seem to be in the least intermitted by his marriage; on the contrary, when he was called upon to support his renown, his wife was often known also in military exploits, nor was she inferior to him in thirst after fame. They both assumed the cross at the same time, that being then the predominating folly in Europe.

The Countess Brenhilda was now above six-and-twenty years old, with as much beauty as can well fall to the share of an Amazon. A figure, of the largest feminine size, was surmounted by a noble countenance, to which even repeated warlike toils had not given more than a sunny hue, relieved by the dazzling whiteness of such parts of her face as were not usually displayed.

As Alexius gave orders that his retinue should return to Constantinople, he spoke in private to the Follower, Achilles Tatius. The Satrap answered with a submissive bend of the head, and separated with a few attendants from the main body of the Emperor's train. The principal road to the city was, of course, filled with the troops, and with the numerous crowds of spectators, all of whom were inconvenienced in some degree by the dust and heat of the weather.

Count Robert of Paris had embarked his horses on board of ship, and all his retinue, except an old squire or valet of his own, and an attendant of his wife. He felt himself more incommoded in this

crowd than he desired, especially as his wife shared it with him, and began to look among the scattered trees which fringed the shores down almost to the tide-mark, to see if he could discern any bypath which might carry them more circuitously, but more pleasantly, to the city, and afford them at the same time, what was their principal object in the East, strange sights, or adventures of chivalry. A broad and beaten path seemed to promise them all the enjoyment which shade could give in a warm climate. The ground through which it wound its way was beautifully broken by the appearance of temples, churches, and kiosks, and here and there a fountain distributed its silver produce, like a benevolent individual, who, self-denying to himself, is liberal to all others who are in necessity. The distant sound of the martial music still regaled their way; and, at the same time, as it detained the populace on the high-road, prevented the strangers from becoming incommoded with fellow-travellers.

Rejoicing in the abated heat of the day—wondering, at the same time, at the various kinds of architecture, the strange features of the landscape, or accidental touches of manners exhibited by those who met or passed them upon their journey, they strolled easily onwards. One figure particularly caught the attention of the Countess Brenhilda. This was an old man of great stature, engaged, apparently, so deeply with the roll of parchment which he held in his hand, that he paid no attention to the objects which were passing around

him. Deep thought appeared to reign on his brow, and his eye was of that piercing kind which seems designed to search and winnow the frivolous from the edifying part of human discussion, and limit its enquiry to the last. Raising his eyes slowly from the parchment on which he had been gazing, the look of Agelastes—for it was the sage himself—encountered those of Count Robert and his lady, and addressing them with the kindly epithet of "my children," he asked if they had missed their road, or whether there was any thing in which he could do them any pleasure.

"We are strangers, father," was the answer, "from a distant country, and belonging to the army which has passed hither upon pilgrimage; one object brings us here in common, we hope, with all that host. We desire to pay our devotions where the great ransom was paid for us, and to free, by our good swords, enslaved Palestine, from the usurpation and tyranny of the infidel. When we have said this, we have announced our highest human motive. Yet Robert of Paris and his Countess would not willingly set their foot on a land, save what should resound its echo. They have not been accustomed to move in silence upon the face of the earth, and they would purchase an eternal life of fame, though it were at the price of mortal existence."

"You seek then to barter safety for fame," said Agelastes, "though you may, perchance, throw death into the scale by which you hope to gain it?"

"Assuredly," said Count Robert; "nor is there

one wearing such a belt as this, to whom such a thought is stranger."

"And as I understand," said Agelastes, "your lady shares with your honourable self in these valorous resolutions?—Can this be?"

"You may undervalue my female courage, father, if such is your will," said the Countess; "but I speak in presence of a witness who can attest the truth, when I say, that a man of half your years had not doubted the truth with impunity."

"Nay, Heaven protect me from the lightning of your eyes," said Agelastes, "whether in anger or in scorn. I bear an ægis about myself against what I should else have feared. But age, with its incapacities, brings also its apologies. Perhaps, indeed, it is one like me whom you seek to find, and in that case I should be happy to render to you such services as it is my duty to offer to all worthy knights."

"I have already said," replied Count Robert, "that after the accomplishment of my vow,"—he looked upwards and crossed himself,—"there is nothing on earth to which I am more bound, than to celebrate my name in arms as becomes a valiant cavalier. When men die obscurely, they die for ever. Had my ancestor Charles never left the paltry banks of the Saale, he had not now been much better known than any vine-dresser who wielded his pruning-hook in the same territories. But he bore him like a brave man, and his name is deathless in the memory of the worthy."

"Young man," said the old Grecian, "although

it is but seldom that such as you, whom I was made to serve and to value, visit this country, it is not the less true that I am well qualified to serve you in the matter which you have so much at heart. My acquaintance with nature has been so perfect and so long, that, during its continuance, she has disappeared, and another world has been spread before me, in which she has but little to do. Thus the curious stores which I have assembled, are beyond the researches of other men, and not to be laid before those whose deeds of valour are to be bounded by the ordinary probabilities of every-day nature. No romancer of your romantic country, ever devised such extraordinary adventures out of his own imagination, and to feed the idle wonder of those who sat listening around, as those which I know, not of idle invention, but of real positive existence, with the means of achieving and accomplishing the conditions of each adventure."

"If such be your real profession," said the French Count, "you have met one of those whom you chiefly search for; nor will my Countess and I stir farther upon our road until you have pointed out to us some one of those adventures which it is the business of errant-knights to be industrious in seeking out."

So saying, he sat down by the side of the old man; and his lady, with a degree of reverence which had something in it almost diverting, followed his example.

"We have fallen right, Brenhilda," said Count Robert; "our guardian angel has watched his charge

carefully. Here have we come among an ignorant set of pedants, chattering their absurd language, and holding more important the least look that a cowardly Emperor can give, than the best blow that a good knight can deal. Believe me, I was wellnigh thinking that we had done ill to take the cross—God forgive such an impious doubt! Yet here, when we were even despairing to find the road to fame, we have met with one of those excellent men whom the knights of yore were wont to find sitting by springs, by crosses, and by altars, ready to direct the wandering knight where fame was to be found. Disturb him not, my Brenhilda," said the Count, "but let him recall to himself his stories of the ancient time, and thou shalt see he will enrich us with the treasures of his information."

"If," replied Agelastes, after some pause, "I have waited for a longer term than human life is granted to most men, I shall still be overpaid by dedicating what remains of existence to the service of a pair so devoted to chivalry. What first occurs to me is a story of our Greek country, so famous in adventures, and which I shall briefly detail to you:—

"Afar hence, in our renowned Grecian Archipelago, amid storms and whirlpools, rocks which, changing their character, appear to precipitate themselves against each other, and billows that are never in a pacific state, lies the rich island of Zulichium, inhabited, notwithstanding its wealth, by a very few natives, who live only upon the sea-coast.

The inland part of the island is one immense mountain, or pile of mountains, amongst which, those who dare approach near enough, may, we are assured, discern the mossgrown and antiquated towers and pinnacles of a stately, but ruinous castle, the habitation of the sovereign of the island, in which she has been enchanted for a great many years.

"A bold knight, who came upon a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, made a vow to deliver this unhappy victim of pain and sorcery; feeling, with justice, vehemently offended, that the fiends of darkness should exercise any authority near the Holy Land, which might be termed the very fountain of light. Two of the oldest inhabitants of the island undertook to guide him as near to the main gate as they durst, nor did they approach it more closely than the length of a bow-shot. Here, then, abandoned to himself, the brave Frank set forth upon his enterprise, with a stout heart, and Heaven alone to friend. The fabric which he approached showed, by its gigantic size, and splendour of outline, the power and wealth of the potentate who had erected it. The brazen gates unfolded themselves as if with hope and pleasure; and aerial voices swept around the spires and turrets, congratulating the genius of the place, it might be, upon the expected approach of its deliverer.

"The knight passed on, not unmoved with wonder, though untainted by fear; and the Gothic splendours which he saw were of a kind highly to exalt his idea of the beauty of the mistress for

whom a prison-house had been so richly decorated. Guards there were in Eastern dress and arms, upon bulwark and buttress, in readiness, it appeared, to bend their bows; but the warriors were motionless and silent, and took no more notice of the armed step of the knight than if a monk or hermit had approached their guarded post. They were living, and yet, as to all power and sense, they might be considered among the dead. If there was truth in the old tradition, the sun had shone and the rain had fallen upon them for more than four hundred changing seasons, without their being sensible of the genial warmth of the one or the coldness of the other. Like the Israelites in the desert, their shoes had not decayed, nor their vestments waxed old. As Time left them, so and without alteration was he again to find them." The philosopher began now to recall what he had heard of the cause of their enchantment.

"The sage, to whom this potent charm is imputed, was one of the Magi who followed the tenets of Zoroaster. He had come to the court of this youthful Princess, who received him with every attention which gratified vanity could dictate, so that in a short time her awe of this grave personage was lost in the sense of ascendency which her beauty gave her over him. It was no difficult matter—in fact it happens every day—for the beautiful woman to lull the wise man into what is not unaptly called a fool's paradise. The sage was induced to attempt feats of youth which his years rendered ridiculous; he could command the

elements, but the common course of nature was beyond his power. When, therefore, he exerted his magic strength, the mountains bent and the seas receded; but when the philosopher attempted to lead forth the Princess of Zulichium in the youthful dance, youths and maidens turned their heads aside lest they should make too manifest the ludicrous ideas with which they were impressed.

"Unhappily, as the aged, even the wisest of them, will forget themselves, so the young naturally enter into an alliance to spy out, ridicule, and enjoy their foibles. Many were the glances which the Princess sent among her retinue, intimating the nature of the amusement which she received from the attentions of her formidable lover. In process of time, she lost her caution, and a glance was detected, expressing to the old man the ridicule and contempt in which he had been all along held by the object of his affections. Earth has no passion so bitter as love converted to hatred; and while the sage bitterly regretted what he had done, he did not the less resent the light-hearted folly of the Princess by whom he had been duped.

"If, however, he was angry, he possessed the art to conceal it. Not a word, not a look expressed the bitter disappointment which he had received. A shade of melancholy, or rather gloom, upon his brow, alone intimated the coming storm. The Princess became somewhat alarmed; she was besides extremely good-natured, nor had her intentions of leading the old man into what would render him ridiculous, been so accurately planned

with malice prepense, as they were the effect of accident and chance. She saw the pain which he suffered, and thought to end it by going up to him, when about to retire, and kindly wishing him good-night.

"'You say well, daughter,' said the sage, 'good-night—but who, of the numbers who hear me, shall say good-morning?'

"The speech drew little attention, although two or three persons to whom the character of the sage was known, fled from the island that very night, and by their report made known the circumstances attending the first infliction of this extraordinary spell on those who remained within the Castle. A sleep like that of death fell upon them, and was not removed. Most of the inhabitants left the island; the few who remained were cautious how they approached the castle, and watched until some bold adventurer should bring that happy awakening which the speech of the sorcerer seemed in some degree to intimate.

"Never seemed there a fairer opportunity for that awakening to take place than when the proud step of Artavan de Hautlieu was placed upon those enchanted courts. On the left, lay the palace and donjon-keep; but the right, more attractive, seemed to invite to the apartment of the women. At a side door, reclined on a couch, two guards of the haram, with their naked swords grasped in their hands, and features fiendishly contorted between sleep and dissolution, seemed to menace death to any who should venture to approach. This threat deter-

red not Artavan de Hautlieu. He approached the entrance, when the doors, like those of the great entrance to the Castle, made themselves instantly accessible to him. A guard-room of the same effeminate soldiers received him, nor could the strictest examination have discovered to him whether it was sleep or death which arrested the eyes that seemed to look upon and prohibit his advance. Unheeding the presence of these ghastly sentinels, Artavan pressed forward into an inner apartment, where female slaves of the most distinguished beauty were visible in the attitude of those who had already assumed their dress for the night. There was much in this scene which might have arrested so young a pilgrim as Artavan of Hautlieu; but his heart was fixed upon achieving the freedom of the beautiful Princess, nor did he suffer himself to be withdrawn from that object by any inferior consideration. He passed on, therefore, to a little ivory door, which, after a moment's pause, as if in maidenly hesitation, gave way like the rest, and yielded access to the sleeping apartment of the Princess herself. A soft light, resembling that of evening, penetrated into a chamber where every thing seemed contrived to exalt the luxury of slumber. The heaps of cushions, which formed a stately bed, seemed rather to be touched than impressed by the form of a nymph of fifteen, the renowned Princess of Zulichium."

"Without interrupting you, good father," said the Countess Brenhilda, "it seems to me that we can comprehend the picture of a woman asleep,

without much dilating upon it, and that such a subject is little recommended either by our age or by yours."

"Pardon me, noble lady," answered Agelastes, "the most approved part of my story has ever been this passage, and while I now suppress it in obedience to your command, bear notice, I pray you, that I sacrifice the most beautiful part of the tale."

"Brenhilda," added the Count, "I am surprised you think of interrupting a story which has hitherto proceeded with so much fire; the telling of a few words more or less will surely have a much greater influence upon the sense of the narrative, than such an addition can possibly possess over our sentiments of action."

"As you will," said his lady, throwing herself carelessly back upon the seat; "but methinks the worthy father protracts this discourse, till it becomes of a nature more trifling than interesting."

"Brenhilda," said the Count, "this is the first time I have remarked in you a woman's weakness."

"I may as well say, Count Robert, that it is the first time," answered Brenhilda, "that you have shown to me the inconstancy of your sex."

"Gods and goddesses," said the philosopher, "was ever known a quarrel more absurdly founded! The Countess is jealous of one whom her husband probably never will see, nor is there any prospect that the Princess of Zulichium will be hereafter better known to the modern world, than if the curtain hung before her tomb."

"Proceed," said Count Robert of Paris; "if

Sir Artavan of Hautlieu has not accomplished the enfranchisement of the Princess of Zulichium, I make a vow to our Lady of the Broken Lances"—

"Remember," said his lady, interfering, "that you are already under a vow to free the Sepulchre of God; and to that, methinks, all lighter engagements might give place."

"Well, lady—well," said Count Robert, but half satisfied with this interference, "I will not engage myself, you may be assured, on any adventure which may claim precedence of the enterprise of the Holy Sepulchre, to which we are all bound."

"Alas!" said Agelastes, "the distance of Zulichium from the speediest route to the sepulchre is so small, that"——

"Worthy father," said the Countess, "we will, if it pleases you, hear your tale to an end, and then determine what we will do. We Norman ladies, descendants of the old Germans, claim a voice with our lords in the council which precedes the battle; nor has our assistance in the conflict been deemed altogether useless."

The tone in which this was spoken conveyed an awkward innuendo to the philosopher, who began to foresee that the guidance of the Norman knight would be more difficult than he had foreseen, while his consort remained by his side. He took up, therefore, his oratory on somewhat a lower key than before, and avoided those warm descriptions which had given such offence to the Countess Brenhilda.

"Sir Artavan de Hautlieu, says the story,

considered in what way he should accost the sleeping damsel, when it occurred to him in what manner the charm would be most likely to be reversed. I am in your judgment, fair lady, if he judged wrong in resolving that the method of his address should be a kiss upon the lips." The colour of Brenhilda was somewhat heightened, but she did not deem the observation worthy of notice.

"Never had so innocent an action," continued the philosopher, "an effect more horrible. The delightful light of a summer evening was instantly changed into a strange lurid hue, which, infected with sulphur, seemed to breathe suffocation through the apartment. The rich hangings, and splendid furniture of the chamber, the very walls themselves, were changed into huge stones tossed together at random, like the inside of a wild beast's den; nor was the den without an inhabitant. The beautiful and innocent lips to which Artavan de Hautlieu had approached his own, were now changed into the hideous and bizarre form, and bestial aspect of a fiery dragon. A moment she hovered upon the wing, and it is said, had Sir Artavan found courage to repeat his salute three times, he would then have remained master of all the wealth, and of the disenchanted princess. But the opportunity was lost, and the dragon, or the creature who seemed such, sailed out at a side window upon its broad pennons, uttering loud wails of disappointment."

Here ended the story of Agelastes. "The Princess," he said, "is still supposed to abide her

doom in the Island of Zulichium, and several knights have undertaken the adventure; but I know not whether it was the fear of saluting the sleeping maiden, or that of approaching the dragon into which she was transformed, but so it is, the spell remains unachieved. I know the way, and if you say the word, you may be to-morrow on the road to the castle of enchantment."

The Countess heard this proposal with the deepest anxiety, for she knew that she might, by opposition, determine her husband irrevocably upon following out the enterprise. She stood therefore with a timid and bashful look, strange in a person whose bearing was generally so dauntless, and prudently left it to the uninfluenced mind of Count Robert to form the resolution which should best please him.

"Brenhilda," he said, taking her hand, "fame and honour are dear to thy husband as ever they were to knight who buckled a brand upon his side. Thou hast done, perhaps, I may say, for me, what I might in vain have looked for from ladies of thy condition; and therefore thou mayst well expect a casting voice in such points of deliberation.—Why dost thou wander by the side of a foreign and unhealthy shore, instead of the banks of the lovely Seine?—Why dost thou wear a dress unusual to thy sex?—Why dost thou seek death, and think it little, in comparison of shame?—Why? but that the Count of Paris may have a bride worthy of him. —Dost thou think that this affection is thrown away? No, by the saints! Thy knight repays it

as he best ought, and sacrifices to thee every thought which thy affection may less than entirely approve!"

Poor Brenhilda, confused as she was by the various emotions with which she was agitated, now in vain endeavoured to maintain the heroic deportment which her character as an Amazon required from her. She attempted to assume the proud and lofty look which was properly her own, but failing in the effort, she threw herself into the Count's arms, hung round his neck, and wept like a village maiden, whose true love is pressed for the wars. Her husband, a little ashamed, while he was much moved by this burst of affection in one to whose character it seemed an unusual attribute, was, at the same time, pleased and proud that he could have awakened an affection so genuine and so gentle in a soul so high-spirited and so unbending.

"Not thus," he said, "my Brenhilda! I would not have it thus, either for thine own sake or for mine. Do not let this wise old man suppose that thy heart is made of the malleable stuff which forms that of other maidens; and apologize to him, as may well become thee, for having prevented my undertaking the adventure of Zulichium, which he recommends."

It was not easy for Brenhilda to recover herself, after having afforded so notable an instance how nature can vindicate her rights, with whatever rigour she may have been disciplined and tyrannized over. With a look of ineffable affection, she disjoined herself from her husband, still keeping hold of his hand, and turning to the old man with

a countenance in which the half-effaced tears were succeeded by smiles of pleasure and of modesty, she spoke to Agelastes as she would to a person whom she respected, and towards whom she had some offence to atone. "Father," she said, respectfully, "be not angry with me that I should have been an obstacle to one of the best knights that ever spurred steed, undertaking the enterprise of thine enchanted Princess; but the truth is, that in our land, where knighthood and religion agree in permitting only one lady love, and one lady wife, we do not quite so willingly see our husbands run into danger—especially of that kind where lonely ladies are the parties relieved—and—and kisses are the ransom paid. I have as much confidence in my Robert's fidelity, as a lady can have in a loving knight, but still"——

"Lovely lady," said Agelastes, who, notwithstanding his highly artificial character, could not help being moved by the simple and sincere affection of the handsome young pair, "you have done no evil. The state of the Princess is no worse than it was, and there cannot be a doubt that the knight fated to relieve her, will appear at the destined period."

The Countess smiled sadly, and shook her head. "You do not know," she said, "how powerful is the aid of which I have unhappily deprived this unfortunate lady, by a jealousy which I now feel to have been alike paltry and unworthy; and, such is my regret, that I could find in my heart to retract my opposition to Count Robert's under-

taking this adventure." She looked at her husband with some anxiety, as one that had made an offer she would not willingly see accepted, and did not recover her courage until he said, decidedly, "Brenhilda, that may not be."

"And why, then, may not Brenhilda herself take the adventure," continued the Countess, "since she can neither fear the charms of the Princess, nor the terrors of the dragon?"

"Lady," said Agelastes, "the Princess must be awakened by the kiss of love, and not by that of friendship."

"A sufficient reason," said the Countess, smiling, "why a lady may not wish her lord to go forth upon an adventure of which the conditions are so regulated."

"Noble minstrel, or herald, or by whatever name this country calls you," said Count Robert, "accept a small remuneration for an hour pleasantly spent, though spent, unhappily, in vain. I should make some apology for the meanness of my offering, but French knights, you may have occasion to know, are more full of fame than of wealth."

"Not for that, noble sir," replied Agelastes, "would I refuse your munificence; a besant from your worthy hand, or that of your noble-minded lady, were centupled in its value, by the eminence of the persons from whom it came. I would hang it round my neck by a string of pearls, and when I came into the presence of knights and of ladies, I would proclaim that this addition to my achieve-

ment of armorial distinction, was bestowed by the renowned Count Robert of Paris, and his unequalled lady." The Knight and the Countess looked on each other, and the lady, taking from her finger a ring of pure gold, prayed the old man to accept of it, as a mark of her esteem and her husband's. "With one other condition," said the philosopher, "which I trust you will not find altogether unsatisfactory. I have, on the way to the city by the most pleasant road, a small kiosk, or hermitage, where I sometimes receive my friends, who, I venture to say, are among the most respectable personages of this empire. Two or three of these will probably honour my residence to-day, and partake of the provision it affords. Could I add to these the company of the noble Count and Countess of Paris, I should deem my poor habitation honoured for ever."

"How say you, my noble wife?" said the Count. "The company of a minstrel befits the highest birth, honours the highest rank, and adds to the greatest achievements; and the invitation does us too much credit to be rejected."

"It grows somewhat late," said the Countess; "but we came not here to shun a sinking sun or a darkening sky, and I feel it my duty, as well as my satisfaction, to place at the command of the good father every pleasure which it is in my power to offer to him, for having been the means of your neglecting his advice."

"The path is so short," said Agelastes, "that we had better keep our present mode of travel-

ling, if the lady should not want the assistance of horses."

"No horses on my account," said the Lady Brenhilda. "My waiting-woman, Agatha, has what necessaries I may require; and, for the rest, no knight ever travelled so little embarrassed with baggage as my husband."

Agelastes, therefore, led the way through the deepening wood, which was freshened by the cooler breath of evening, and his guests accompanied him.

CHAPTER XI.

Without, a ruin, broken, tangled, cumbrous,
Within, it was a little paradise,
Where Taste had made her dwelling. Statuary,
First-born of human art, moulded her images,
And bade men mark and worship.

Anonymous.

THE Count of Paris and his lady attended the old man, whose advanced age, his excellence in the use of the French language, which he spoke to admiration,—above all, his skill in applying it to poetical and romantic subjects, which was essential to what was then termed history and belles lettres,—drew from the noble hearers a degree of applause, which, as Agelastes had seldom been vain enough to consider as his due, so, on the part of the Knight of Paris and his lady, had it been but rarely conferred.

They had walked for some time by a path which sometimes seemed to hide itself among the woods that came down to the shore of the Propontis, sometimes emerged from concealment, and skirted the open margin of the strait, while, at every turn, it seemed guided by the desire to select a choice and contrast of beauty. Variety of scenes and manners enlivened, from their novelty, the landscape to the pilgrims. By the sea-shore, nymphs were seen dan-

cing, and shepherds piping, or beating the tambourine to their steps, as represented in some groups of ancient statuary. The very faces had a singular resemblance to the antique. If old, their long robes, their attitudes, and magnificent heads, presented the ideas which distinguish prophets and saints; while, on the other hand, the features of the young recalled the expressive countenances of the heroes of antiquity, and the charms of those lovely females by whom their deeds were inspired.

But the race of the Greeks was no longer to be seen, even in its native country, unmixed, or in absolute purity; on the contrary, they saw groups of persons with features which argued a different descent.

In a retiring bosom of the shore, which was traversed by the path, the rocks, receding from the beach, rounded off a spacious portion of level sand, and, in some degree, enclosed it. A party of heathen Scythians whom they beheld, presented the deformed features of the demons they were said to worship—flat noses with expanded nostrils, which seemed to admit the sight to their very brain; faces which extended rather in breadth than length, with strange unintellectual eyes placed in the extremity; figures short and dwarfish, yet garnished with legs and arms of astonishing sinewy strength, disproportioned to their bodies. As the travellers passed, the savages held a species of tournament, as the Count termed it. In this they exercised themselves by darting at each other long reeds, or canes, balanced for the purpose, which, in this rude

sport, they threw with such force, as not unfrequently to strike each other from their steeds, and otherwise to cause serious damage. Some of the combatants being, for the time, out of the play, devoured with greedy looks the beauty of the Countess, and eyed her in such a manner, that she said to Count Robert,—"I have never known fear, my husband, nor is it for me to acknowledge it now; but if disgust be an ingredient of it, these misformed brutes are qualified to inspire it."

"What, ho, Sir Knight!" exclaimed one of the infidels, "your wife, or your lady love, has committed a fault against the privileges of the Imperial Scythians, and not small will be the penalty she has incurred. You may go your way as fast as you will out of this place, which is, for the present, our hippodrome, or atmeidan, call it which you will, as you prize the Roman or the Saracen language; but for your wife, if the sacrament has united you, believe my word, that she parts not so soon nor so easy."

"Scoundrel heathen," said the Christian Knight, "dost thou hold that language to a Peer of France?"

Agelastes here interposed, and using the sounding language of a Grecian courtier, reminded the Scythians, (mercenary soldiers, as they seemed, of the empire,) that all violence against the European pilgrims was, by the Imperial orders, strictly prohibited under pain of death.

"I know better," said the exulting savage, shaking one or two javelins with broad steel heads,

and wings of the eagle's feather, which last were dabbled in blood. "Ask the wings of my javelin," he said, "in whose heart's blood these feathers have been dyed. They shall reply to you, that if Alexius Comnenus be the friend of the European pilgrims, it is only while he looks upon them; and we are too exemplary soldiers to serve our Emperor otherwise than he wishes to be served."

"Peace, Toxartis," said the philosopher, "thou beliest thine Emperor."

"Peace thou!" said Toxartis, "or I will do a deed that misbecomes a soldier, and rid the world of a prating old man."

So saying, he put forth his hand to take hold of the Countess's veil. With the readiness which frequent use had given to the warlike lady, she withdrew herself from the heathen's grasp, and with her trenchant sword dealt him so sufficient a blow, that Toxartis lay lifeless on the plain. The Count leapt on the fallen leader's steed, and crying his war-cry, "Son of Charlemagne, to the rescue!" he rode amid the rout of heathen cavaliers with a battle-axe, which he found at the saddle-bow of the deceased chieftain, and wielding it with remorseless dexterity, he soon slew or wounded, or compelled to flight, the objects of his resentment; nor was there any of them who abode an instant to support the boast which they had made.

"The despicable churls!" said the Countess to Agelastes; "it irks me that a drop of such coward blood should stain the hands of a noble knight. They call their exercise a tournament, although in

their whole exertions every blow is aimed behind the back, and not one has the courage to throw his windlestraw while he perceives that of another pointed against himself."

"Such is their custom," said Agelastes; "not perhaps so much from cowardice as from habit, in exercising before his Imperial Majesty. I have seen that Toxartis literally turn his back upon the mark when he bent his bow in full career, and when in the act of galloping the farthest from his object, he pierced it through the very centre with a broad arrow."

"A force of such soldiers," said Count Robert, who had now rejoined his friends, "could not, methinks, be very formidable, where there was but an ounce of genuine courage in the assailants."

"Mean time, let us pass on to my kiosk," said Agelastes, "lest the fugitives find friends to encourage them in thoughts of revenge."

"Such friends," said Count Robert, "methinks, the insolent heathens ought not to find in any land which calls itself Christian; and if I survive the conquest of the Holy Sepulchre, I shall make it my first business to enquire by what right your Emperor retains in his service a band of Paynim and unmannerly cut-throats, who dare offer injury upon the highway, which ought to be sacred to the peace of God and the king, and to noble ladies and inoffensive pilgrims. It is one of a list of many questions which, my vow accomplished, I will not fail to put to him; ay, and expecting an answer, as they say, prompt and categorical."

"You shall gain no answer from me though," said Agelastes to himself. "Your demands, Sir Knight, are over peremptory, and imposed under too rigid conditions, to be replied to by those who can evade them."

He changed the conversation, accordingly, with easy dexterity; and they had not proceeded much farther, before they reached a spot, the natural beauties of which called forth the admiration of his foreign companions. A copious brook, gushing out of the woodland, descended to the sea with no small noise and tumult; and, as if disdaining a quieter course, which it might have gained by a little circuit to the right, it took the readiest road to the ocean, plunging over the face of a lofty and barren precipice which overhung the sea-shore, and from thence led its little tribute, with as much noise as if it had the stream of a full river to boast of, to the waters of the Hellespont.

The rock, we have said, was bare, unless in so far as it was clothed with the foaming waters of the cataract; but the banks on each side were covered with plane-trees, walnut-trees, cypresses, and other kinds of large timber proper to the East. The fall of water, always agreeable in a warm climate, and generally produced by artificial means, was here natural, and had been chosen, something like the Sibyl's temple at Tivoli, for the seat of a goddess to whom the invention of Polytheism had assigned a sovereignty over the department around. The shrine was small and circular, like many of the lesser temples of the rustic deities, and enclo-

sed by the wall of an outer court. After its desecration, it had probably been converted into a luxurious summer retreat by Agelastes, or some Epicurean philosopher. As the building, itself of a light, airy, and fantastic character, was dimly seen through the branches and foliage on the edge of the rock, so the mode by which it was accessible was not at first apparent amongst the mist of the cascade. A pathway, a good deal hidden by vegetation, ascended by a gentle acclivity, and, prolonged by the architect by means of a few broad and easy marble steps, making part of the original approach, conducted the passenger to a small, but exquisitely lovely velvet lawn, in front of the turret or temple we have described, the back part of which building overhung the cataract.

CHAPTER XII.

The parties met. The wily, wordy Greek,
Weighing each word, and canvassing each syllable;
Evading, arguing, equivocating.
And the stern Frank came with his two-hand sword,
Watching to see which way the balance sways,
That he may throw it in, and turn the scales.
Palestine.

At a signal made by Agelastes, the door of this romantic retreat was opened by Diogenes, the negro slave, to whom our readers have been already introduced; nor did it escape the wily old man, that the Count and his lady testified some wonder at his form and lineaments, being the first African perhaps whom they had ever seen so closely. The philosopher lost not the opportunity of making an impression on their minds, by a display of the superiority of his knowledge.

"This poor being," he observed, "is of the race of Ham, the undutiful son of Noah; for his transgressions against his parent, he was banished to the sands of Africa, and was condemned to be the father of a race doomed to be the slaves of the issue of his more dutiful brethren."

The knight and his lady gazed on the wonderful appearance before them, and did not, it may be

believed, think of doubting the information, which was so much of a piece with their prejudices, while their opinion of their host was greatly augmented by the supposed extent of his knowledge.

"It gives pleasure to a man of humanity," continued Agelastes, "when, in old age or sickness, we must employ the services of others, which is at other times scarce lawful, to choose his assistants out of a race of beings, hewers of wood and drawers of water—from their birth upwards destined to slavery; and to whom, therefore, by employing them as slaves, we render no injury, but carry into effect, in a slight degree, the intentions of the Great Being who made us all."

"Are there many of a race," said the Countess, "so singularly unhappy in their destination? I have hitherto thought the stories of black men as idle as those which minstrels tell of fairies and ghosts."

"Do not believe so," said the philosopher; "the race is numerous as the sands of the sea, neither are they altogether unhappy in discharging the duties which their fate has allotted them. Those who are of worse character suffer even in this life the penance due to their guilt; they become the slaves of the cruel and tyrannical, are beaten, starved, and mutilated. To those whose moral characters are better, better masters are provided, who share with their slaves, as with their children, food and raiment, and the other good things which they themselves enjoy. To some, Heaven allots the favour of kings and of conquerors, and to a few,

but those the chief favourites of the species, hath been assigned a place in the mansions of philosophy, where, by availing themselves of the lights which their masters can afford, they gain a prospect into that world which is the residence of true happiness."

"Methinks I understand you," replied the Countess, "and if so, I ought rather to envy our sable friend here than to pity him, for having been allotted in the partition of his kind to the possession of his present master, from whom, doubtless, he has acquired the desirable knowledge which you mention."

"He learns, at least," said Agelastes, modestly, "what I can teach, and, above all, to be contented with his situation.—Diogenes, my good child," said he, changing his address to the slave, "thou seest I have company—What does the poor hermit's larder afford, with which he may regale his honoured guests?"

Hitherto they had advanced no farther than a sort of outer room, or hall of entrance, fitted up with no more expense than might have suited one who desired at some outlay, and more taste, to avail himself of the ancient building for a sequestered and private retirement. The chairs and couches were covered with Eastern wove mats, and were of the simplest and most primitive form. But on touching a spring, an interior apartment was displayed, which had considerable pretension to splendour and magnificence.

The furniture and hangings of this apartment

were of straw-coloured silk, wrought on the looms of Persia, and crossed with embroidery, which produced a rich, yet simple effect. The ceiling was carved in arabesque, and the four corners of the apartment were formed into recesses for statuary, which had been produced in a better age of the art than that which existed at the period of our story. In one nook, a shepherd seemed to withdraw himself, as if ashamed to produce his scantily-covered person, while he was willing to afford the audience the music of the reed which he held in his hand. Three damsels, resembling the Graces in the beautiful proportions of their limbs, and the slender clothing which they wore, lurked in different attitudes, each in her own niche, and seemed but to await the first sound of the music, to bound forth from thence and join in the frolic dance. The subject was beautiful, yet somewhat light, to ornament the study of such a sage as Agelastes represented himself to be.

He seemed to be sensible that this might attract observation.—"These figures," he said, "executed at the period of the highest excellence of Grecian art, were considered of old as the choral nymphs assembled to adore the goddess of the place, waiting but the music to join in the worship of the temple. And, in truth, the wisest may be interested in seeing how near to animation the genius of these wonderful men could bring the inflexible marble. Allow but for the absence of the divine afflatus, or breath of animation, and an unenlightened heathen might suppose the miracle of

Prometheus was about to be realized. But we," said he, looking upwards, "are taught to form a better judgment between what man can do and the productions of the Deity."

Some subjects of natural history were painted on the walls, and the philosopher fixed the attention of his guests upon the half-reasoning elephant, of which he mentioned several anecdotes, which they listened to with great eagerness.

A distant strain was here heard, as if of music in the woods, penetrating by fits through the hoarse roar of the cascade, which, as it sunk immediately below the windows, filled the apartment with its deep voice.

"Apparently," said Agelastes, "the friends whom I expected are approaching, and bring with them the means of enchanting another sense. It is well they do so, since wisdom tells us that we best honour the Deity by enjoying the gifts he has provided us."

These words called the attention of the philosopher's Frankish guests to the preparations exhibited in this tasteful saloon. These were made for an entertainment in the manner of the ancient Romans, and couches, which were laid beside a table ready decked, announced that the male guests, at least, were to assist at the banquet in the usual recumbent posture of the ancients; while seats, placed among the couches, seemed to say that females were expected, who would observe the Grecian customs, in eating seated. The prepara-

tions for good cheer were such as, though limited in extent, could scarce be excelled in quality, either by the splendid dishes which decked Trimalchio's banquet of former days, or the lighter delicacies of Grecian cookery, or the succulent and highly-spiced messes indulged in by the nations of the East, to whichever they happened to give the preference; and it was with an air of some vanity that Agelastes asked his guests to share a poor pilgrim's meal.

"We care little for dainties," said the Count; "nor does our present course of life as pilgrims, bound by a vow, allow us much choice on such subjects. Whatever is food for soldiers, suffices the Countess and myself; for, with our will, we would at every hour be ready for battle, and the less time we use in preparing for the field, it is even so much the better. Sit then, Brenhilda, since the good man will have it so, and let us lose no time in refreshment, lest we waste that which should be otherwise employed."

"A moment's forgiveness," said Agelastes, "until the arrival of my other friends, whose music you may now hear is close at hand, and who will not long, I may safely promise, divide you from your meal."

"For that," said the Count, "there is no haste; and since you seem to account it a part of civil manners, Brenhilda and I can with ease postpone our repast, unless you will permit us, what I own would be more pleasing, to take a morsel of bread and a cup of water presently; and, thus refreshed,

to leave the space clear for your more curious and more familiar guests."

"The saints above forbid!" said Agelastes: "guests so honoured never before pressed these cushions, nor could do so, if the sacred family of the imperial Alexius himself even now stood at the gate."

He had hardly uttered these words, when the full-blown peal of a trumpet, louder in a tenfold degree than the strains of music they had before heard, was now sounded in the front of the temple, piercing through the murmur of the waterfall, as a Damascus blade penetrates the armour, and assailing the ears of the hearers, as the sword pierces the flesh of him who wears the harness.

"You seem surprised or alarmed, father," said Count Robert. "Is there danger near, and do you distrust our protection?"

"No," said Agelastes, "that would give me confidence in any extremity; but these sounds excite awe, not fear. They tell me that some of the imperial family are about to be my guests. Yet fear nothing, my noble friends—they, whose look is life, are ready to shower their favours with profusion upon strangers so worthy of honour as they will see here. Mean time, my brow must touch my threshold, in order duly to welcome them." So saying, he hurried to the outer door of the building.

"Each land has its customs," said the Count, as he followed his host, with his wife hanging on his arm; "but, Brenhilda, as they are so various, it is little wonder that they appear unseemly to each

other. Here, however, in deference to my entertainer, I stoop my crest, in the manner which seems to be required." So saying, he followed Agelastes into the anteroom, where a new scene awaited them.

CHAPTER XIII.

AGELASTES gained his threshold before Count Robert of Paris and his lady. He had, therefore, time to make his prostrations before a huge animal, then unknown to the western world, but now universally distinguished as the elephant. On its back was a pavilion, or palanquin, within which were enclosed the august persons of the Empress Irene, and her daughter Anna Comnena. Nicephorus Briennius attended the Princesses in the command of a gallant body of light horse, whose splendid armour would have given more pleasure to the crusader, if it had possessed less an air of useless wealth and effeminate magnificence. But the effect which it produced in its appearance was as brilliant as could well be conceived. The officers alone of this *corps de garde* followed Nicephorus to the platform, prostrated themselves while the ladies of the Imperial house descended, and rose up again under a cloud of waving plumes and flashing lances, when they stood secure upon the platform in front of the building. Here the somewhat aged, but commanding, form of the Empress, and the still juvenile beauties of the fair historian, were seen to great

advantage. In the front of a deep background of spears and waving crests, stood the sounder of the sacred trumpet, conspicuous by his size and the richness of his apparel; he kept his post on a rock above the stone staircase, and, by an occasional note of his instrument, intimated to the squadrons beneath that they should stay their progress, and attend the motions of the Empress and the wife of the Cæsar.

The fair form of the Countess Brenhilda, and the fantastic appearance of her half-masculine garb, attracted the attention of the ladies of Alexius' family, but was too extraordinary to command their admiration. Agelastes became sensible there was a necessity that he should introduce his guests to each other, if he desired they should meet on satisfactory terms. "May I speak," he said, "and live? The armed strangers whom you find now with me are worthy companions of those myriads, whom zeal for the suffering inhabitants of Palestine has brought from the western extremity of Europe, at once to enjoy the countenance of Alexius Comnenus, and to aid him, since it pleases him to accept their assistance, in expelling the Paynims from the bounds of the sacred empire, and garrison those regions in their stead, as vassals of his Imperial Majesty."

"We are pleased," said the Empress, "worthy Agelastes, that you should be kind to those who are disposed to be so reverent to the Emperor. And we are rather disposed to talk with them ourselves, that our daughter (whom Apollo hath gifted with

the choice talent of recording what she sees) may become acquainted with one of those female warriors of the West, of whom we have heard so much by common fame, and yet know so little with certainty."

"Madam," said the Count, "I can but rudely express to you what I have to find fault with in the explanation which this old man hath given of our purpose in coming hither. Certain it is, we neither owe Alexius fealty, nor had we the purpose of paying him any, when we took the vow upon ourselves which brought us against Asia. We came, because we understood that the Holy Land had been torn from the Greek Emperor by the Pagans, Saracens, Turks, and other infidels, from whom we are come to win it back. The wisest and most prudent among us have judged it necessary to acknowledge the Emperor's authority, since there was no such safe way of passing to the discharge of our vow, as that of acknowledging fealty to him, as the best mode of preventing quarrels among Christian states. We, though independent of any earthly king, do not pretend to be greater men than they, and therefore have condescended to pay the same homage."

The Empress coloured several times with indignation in the course of this speech, which, in more passages than one, was at variance with those imperial maxims of the Grecian court, which held its dignity so high, and plainly intimated a tone of opinion which was depreciating to the Emperor's power. But the Empress Irene had received instructions from her imperial spouse to beware how

she gave, or even took, any ground of quarrel with the crusaders, who, though coming in the appearance of subjects, were, nevertheless, too punctilious and ready to take fire, to render them safe discussers of delicate differences. She made a graceful reverence accordingly, as if she had scarce understood what the Count of Paris had explained so bluntly.

At this moment the appearance of the principal persons on either hand attracted, in a wonderful degree, the attention of the other party, and there seemed to exist among them a general desire of further acquaintance, and, at the same time, a manifest difficulty in expressing such a wish.

Agelastes—to begin with the master of the house—had risen from the ground indeed, but without venturing to assume an upright posture; he remained before the Imperial ladies with his body and head still bent, his hand interposed between his eyes and their faces, like a man that would shade his eyesight from the level sun, and awaited in silence the commands of those to whom he seemed to think it disrespectful to propose the slightest action, save by testifying in general, that his house and his slaves were at their unlimited command. The Countess of Paris, on the other hand, and her warlike husband, were the peculiar objects of curiosity to Irene, and her accomplished daughter, Anna Comnena; and it occurred to both these Imperial ladies, that they had never seen finer specimens of human strength and beauty; but, by a natural instinct, they preferred the manly

bearing of the husband to that of the wife, which seemed to her own sex rather too haughty and too masculine to be altogether pleasing.

Count Robert and his lady had also their own object of attention in the newly arrived group, and, to speak truth, it was nothing else than the peculiarities of the monstrous animal which they now saw, for the first time, employed as a beast of burden in the service of the fair Irene and her daughter. The dignity and splendour of the elder Princess, the grace and vivacity of the younger, were alike lost in Brenhilda's earnest enquiries into the history of the elephant, and the use which it made of its trunk, tusks, and huge ears, upon different occasions.

Another person who took a less direct opportunity to gaze on Brenhilda with a deep degree of interest, was the Cæsar, Nicephorus. This Prince kept his eye as steadily upon the Frankish Countess as he could well do, without attracting the attention, and exciting perhaps the suspicions, of his wife and mother-in-law; he therefore endeavoured to restore speech to an interview which would have been awkward without it. "It is possible," he said, "beautiful Countess, that this being your first visit to the Queen of the World, you have never hitherto seen the singularly curious animal called the elephant."

"Pardon me," said the Countess, "I have been treated by this learned gentleman to a sight, and some account of that wonderful creature."

By all who heard this observation, the Lady

Brenhilda was supposed to have made a satirical thrust at the philosopher himself, who, in the imperial court, usually went by the name of the Elephant.

"No one could describe the beast more accurately than Agelastes," said the Princess, with a smile of intelligence, which went round her attendants.

"He knows its docility, its sensibility, and its fidelity," said the philosopher in a subdued tone.

"True, good Agelastes," said the Princess; "we should not criticise the animal which kneels to take us up.—Come, lady of a foreign land," she continued, turning to the Frank Count, and especially his Countess—"and you her gallant lord! When you return to your native country, you shall say you have seen the Imperial family partake of their food, and in so far acknowledge themselves to be of the same clay with other mortals, sharing their poorest wants, and relieving them in the same manner."

"That, gentle lady, I can well believe," said Count Robert; "my curiosity would be more indulged by seeing this strange animal at his food."

"You will see the elephant more conveniently at his mess within doors," answered the Princess, looking at Agelastes.

"Lady," said Brenhilda, "I would not willingly refuse an invitation given in courtesy, but the sun has waxed low unnoticed, and we must return to the city."

"Be not afraid," said the fair historian; "you

shall have the advantage of our Imperial escort to protect you in your return."

"Fear?—afraid?—escort?—protect?—These are words I know not. Know, lady, that my husband, the noble Count of Paris, is my sufficient escort; and even were he not with me, Brenhilda de Aspramonte fears nothing, and can defend herself."

"Fair daughter," said Agelastes, "if I may be permitted to speak, you mistake the gracious intentions of the Princess, who expresses herself as to a lady of her own land. What she desires is to learn from you some of the most marked habits and manners of the Franks, of which you are so beautiful an example; and in return for such information the illustrious Princess would be glad to procure your entrance to those spacious collections, where animals from all corners of the habitable world have been assembled at the command of our Emperor Alexius, as if to satisfy the wisdom of those sages to whom all creation is known, from the deer so small in size that it is exceeded by an ordinary rat, to that huge and singular inhabitant of Africa that can browse on the tops of trees that are forty feet high, while the length of its hind legs does not exceed the half of that wondrous height."

"It is enough," said the Countess, with some eagerness; but Agelastes had got a point of discussion after his own mind.

"There is also," he said, "that huge lizard, which, resembling in shape the harmless inhabitant of the moors of other countries, is in Egypt a mon-

ster thirty feet in length, clothed in impenetrable scales, and moaning over his prey when he catches it, with the hope and purpose of drawing others within his danger, by mimicking the lamentations of humanity."

"Say no more, father!" exclaimed the lady. "My Robert, we will go—will we not, where such objects are to be seen?"

"There is also," said Agelastes, who saw that he would gain his point by addressing himself to the curiosity of the strangers, "the huge animal, wearing on its back an invulnerable vestment, having on its nose a horn, and sometimes two, the folds of whose hide are of the most immense thickness, and which never knight was able to wound."

"We will go, Robert—will we not?" reiterated the Countess.

"Ay," replied the Count, "and teach these Easterns how to judge of a knight's sword, by a single blow of my trusty Tranchefer."

"And who knows," said Brenhilda, "since this is a land of enchantment, but what some person, who is languishing in a foreign shape, may have their enchantment unexpectedly dissolved by a stroke of the good weapon?"

"Say no more, father!" exclaimed the Count. "We will attend this Princess, since such she is, were her whole escort bent to oppose our passage, instead of being by her command to be our guard. For know, all who hear me, thus much of the nature of the Franks, that when you tell us of danger and difficulties, you give us the same desire

to travel the road where they lie, as other men have in seeking either pleasure or profit in the paths in which such are to be found."

As the Count pronounced these words, he struck his hand upon his Tranchefer, as an illustration of the manner in which he purposed upon occasion to make good his way. The courtly circle startled somewhat at the clash of steel, and the fiery look of the chivalrous Count Robert. The Empress indulged her alarm by retreating into the inner apartment of the pavilion.

With a grace, which was rarely deigned to any but those in close alliance with the Imperial family, Anna Comnena took the arm of the noble Count. "I see," she said, "that the Imperial Mother has honoured the house of the learned Agelastes, by leading the way; therefore, to teach you Grecian breeding must fall to my share." Saying this, she conducted him to the inner apartment.

"Fear not for your wife," she said, as she noticed the Frank look round; "our husband, like ourselves, has pleasure in showing attention to the stranger, and will lead the Countess to our board. It is not the custom of the Imperial family to eat in company with strangers; but we thank Heaven for having instructed us in that civility, which can know no degradation in dispensing with ordinary rules to do honour to strangers of such merit as yours. I know it will be my mother's request, that you will take your places without ceremony; and also, although the grace be somewhat particu-

lar, I am sure that it will have my Imperial father's approbation."

"Be it as your ladyship lists," said Count Robert. "There are few men to whom I would yield place at the board, if they had not gone before me in the battle-field. To a lady, especially so fair a one, I willingly yield my place, and bend my knee, whenever I have the good hap to meet her."

The Princess Anna, instead of feeling herself awkward in the discharge of the extraordinary, and, as she might have thought it, degrading office of ushering a barbarian chief to the banquet, felt, on the contrary, flattered, at having bent to her purpose a heart so obstinate as that of Count Robert, and elated, perhaps, with a certain degree of satisfied pride while under his momentary protection.

The Empress Irene had already seated herself at the head of the table. She looked with some astonishment, when her daughter and son-in-law, taking their seats at her right and left hand, invited the Count and Countess of Paris, the former to recline, the latter to sit at the board, in the places next to themselves; but she had received the strictest orders from her husband to be deferential in every respect to the strangers, and did not think it right, therefore, to interpose any ceremonious scruples.

The Countess took her seat, as indicated, beside the Cæsar; and the Count, instead of reclining in the mode of the Grecian men, also seated himself in the European fashion by the princess.

"I will not lie prostrate," said he, laughing, "ex-

cept in consideration of a blow weighty enough to compel me to do so; nor then either, if I am able to start up and return it."

The service of the table then began, and, to say truth, it appeared to be an important part of the business of the day. The officers who attended to perform their several duties of deckers of the table, sewers of the banquet, removers and tasters to the Imperial family, thronged into the banqueting room, and seemed to vie with each other in calling upon Agelastes for spices, condiments, sauces, and wines of various kinds, the variety and multiplicity of their demands being apparently devised, *ex preposito*, for stirring the patience of the philosopher. But Agelastes, who had anticipated most of their requests, however unusual, supplied them completely, or in the greatest part, by the ready agency of his active slave Diogenes, to whom, at the same time, he contrived to transfer all blame for the absence of such articles as he was unable to provide.

"Be Homer my witness, the accomplished Virgil, and the curious felicity of Horace, that, trifling and unworthy as this banquet was, my note of directions to this thrice-unhappy slave gave the instructions to procure every ingredient necessary to convey to each dish its proper gusto.—Ill-omened carrion that thou art, wherefore placedst thou the pickled cucumber so far apart from the boar's head? and why are these superb congers unprovided with a requisite quantity of fennel? The divorce betwixt the shell-fish and the Chian wine,

in a presence like this, is worthy of the divorce of thine own soul from thy body; or, to say the least, of a life-long's residence in the Pistrinum." While thus the philosopher proceeded with threats, curses, and menaces against his slave, the stranger might have an opportunity of comparing the little torrent of his domestic eloquence, which the manners of the times did not consider as ill-bred, with the louder and deeper share of adulation towards his guests. They mingled like the oil with the vinegar and pickles which Diogenes mixed for the sauce. Thus the Count and Countess had an opportunity to estimate the happiness and the felicity reserved for those slaves, whom the omnipotent Jupiter, in the plenitude of compassion for their state, and in guerdon of their good morals, had dedicated to the service of a philosopher. The share they themselves took in the banquet, was finished with a degree of speed which gave surprise not only to their host, but also to the Imperial guests.

The Count helped himself carelessly out of a dish which stood near him, and partaking of a draught of wine, without enquiring whether it was of the vintage which the Greeks held it matter of conscience to mingle with that species of food, he declared himself satisfied; nor could the obliging entreaties of his neighbour, Anna Comnena, induce him to partake of other messes represented as being either delicacies or curiosities. His spouse eat still more moderately of the food which seemed most simply cooked, and stood nearest her at the board, and partook of a cup of crystal water, which

she slightly tinged with wine, at the persevering entreaty of the Cæsar. They then relinquished the farther business of the banquet, and, leaning back upon their seats, occupied themselves in watching the liberal credit done to the feast by the rest of the guests present.

A modern synod of gourmands would hardly have equalled the Imperial family of Greece seated at a philosophical banquet, whether in the critical knowledge displayed of the science of eating in all its branches, or in the practical cost and patience with which they exercised it, the ladies, indeed, did not eat much of any one dish, but they tasted of almost all that were presented to them, and their name was Legion. Yet, after a short time, in Homeric phrase, the rage of thirst and hunger was assuaged, or, more probably, the Princess Anna Comnena was tired of being an object of some inattention to the guest who sat next her, and who, joining his high military character to his very handsome presence, was a person by whom few ladies would willingly be neglected. There is no new guise, says our father Chaucer, but what resembles an old one; and the address of Anna Comnena to the Frankish Count might resemble that of a modern lady of fashion, in her attempts to engage in conversation the *exquisite*, who sits by her side in an apparently absent fit. "We have piped unto you," said the Princess, "and you have not danced! We have sung to you the jovial chorus of *Evoe, evoe*, and you will neither worship Comus nor Bacchus! Are we then to judge you a follower of

the Muses, in whose service, as well as in that of Phœbus, we ourselves pretend to be enlisted?"

"Fair lady," replied the Frank, "be not offended at my stating once for all, in plain terms, that I am a Christian man, spitting at, and bidding defiance to, Apollo, Bacchus, Comus, and all other heathen deities whatsoever."

"O! cruel interpretation of my unwary words!" said the Princess; "I did but mention the gods of music, poetry, and eloquence, worshipped by our divine philosophers, and whose names are still used to distinguish the arts and sciences over which they presided—and the Count interprets it seriously into a breach of the second commandment! Our Lady preserve me, we must take care how we speak, when our words are so sharply interpreted."

The Count laughed as the Princess spoke. "I had no offensive meaning, madam," he said, "nor would I wish to interpret your words otherwise than as being most innocent and praiseworthy. I shall suppose that your speech contained all that was fair and blameless. You are, I have understood, one of those who, like our worthy host, express in composition the history and feats of the warlike time in which you live, and give to the posterity which shall succeed us, the knowledge of the brave deeds which have been achieved in our day. I respect the task to which you have dedicated yourself, and know not how a lady could lay after ages under an obligation to her in the same degree, unless, like my wife, Brenhilda, she were herself to be the actress of deeds which she record-

ed. And, by the way, she now looks towards her neighbour at the table, as if she were about to rise and leave him; her inclinations are towards Constantinople, and, with your ladyship's permission, I cannot allow her to go thither alone."

"That you shall neither of you do," said Anna Comnena; "since we all go to the capital directly, and for the purpose of seeing those wonders of nature, of which numerous examples have been collected by the splendour of my Imperial father. —If my husband seems to have given offence to the Countess, do not suppose that it was intentionally dealt to her; on the contrary, you will find the good man, when you are better acquainted with him, to be one of those simple persons who manage so unhappily what they mean for civilities, that those to whom they are addressed receive them frequently in another sense."

The Countess of Paris, however, refused again to sit down to the table from which she had risen, so that Agelastes and his Imperial guests saw themselves under the necessity either to permit the strangers to depart, which they seemed unwilling to do, or to detain them by force, to attempt which might not perhaps have been either safe or pleasant; or, lastly, to have waived the etiquette of rank, and set out along with them, at the same time managing their dignity, so as to take the initiatory step, though the departure took place upon the motion of their wilful guests. Much tumult there was—bustling, disputing, and shouting—among the troops and officers who were thus moved from their

repast, two hours at least sooner than had been experienced upon similar occasions in the memory of the oldest among them. A different arrangement of the Imperial party likewise seemed to take place by mutual consent.

Nicephorus Briennius ascended the seat upon the elephant, and remained there placed beside his august mother-in-law. Agelastes, on a sober-minded palfrey, which permitted him to prolong his philosophical harangues at his own pleasure, rode beside the Countess Brenhilda, whom he made the principal object of his oratory. The fair historian, though she usually travelled in a litter, preferred upon this occasion a spirited horse, which enabled her to keep pace with Count Robert of Paris, on whose imagination, if not his feelings, she seemed to have it in view to work a marked impression. The conversation of the Empress with her son-in-law requires no special detail. It was a tissue of criticisms upon the manners and behaviour of the Franks, and a hearty wish that they might be soon transported from the realms of Greece, never more to return. Such was at least the tone of the Empress, nor did the Cæsar find it convenient to express any more tolerant opinion of the strangers. On the other hand, Agelastes made a long circuit ere he ventured to approach the subject which he wished to introduce. He spoke of the menagerie of the Emperor as a most superb collection of natural history; he extolled different persons at court for having encouraged Alexius Comnenus in this wise and philosophical amusement. But, finally,

the praise of all others was abandoned that the philosopher might dwell upon that of Nicephorus Briennius, to whom the cabinet or collection of Constantinople was indebted, he said, for the principal treasures it contained.

"I am glad it is so," said the haughty Countess, without lowering her voice or affecting any change of manner; "I am glad that he understands some things better worth understanding than whispering with stranger young women. Credit me, if he gives much license to his tongue among such women of my country as these stirring times may bring hither, some one or other of them will fling him into the cataract which dashes below."

"Pardon me, fair lady," said Agelastes; "no female heart could meditate an action so atrocious against so fine a form as that of the Cæsar Nicephorus Briennius."

"Put it not on that issue, father," said the offended Countess; "for, by my patroness Saint, our Lady of the Broken Lances, had it not been for regard to these two ladies, who seemed to intend some respect to my husband and myself, that same Nicephorus should have been as perfectly a Lord of the Broken Bones as any Cæsar who has borne the title since the great Julius!"

The philosopher, upon this explicit information, began to entertain some personal fear for himself, and hastened, by diverting the conversation, which he did with great dexterity, to the story of Hero and Leander, to put the affront received out of the head of this unscrupulous Amazon.

Meantime, Count Robert of Paris was engrossed, as it may be termed, by the fair Anna Comnena. She spoke on all subjects, on some better, doubtless, others worse, but on none did she suspect herself of any deficiency; while the good Count wished heartily within himself that his companion had been safely in bed with the enchanted Princess of Zulichium. She performed, right or wrong, the part of a panegyrist of the Normans, until at length the Count, tired of hearing her prate of she knew not exactly what, broke in as follows:—

"Lady," he said, "notwithstanding I and my followers are sometimes so named, yet we are not Normans, who come hither as a numerous and separate body of pilgrims, under the command of their Duke Robert, a valiant, though extravagant, thoughtless, and weak man. I say nothing against the fame of these Normans. They conquered, in our fathers' day, a kingdom far stronger than their own, which men call England; I see that you entertain some of the natives of which country in your pay, under the name of Varangians. Although defeated, as I said, by the Normans, they are, nevertheless, a brave race; nor would we think ourselves much dishonoured by mixing in battle with them. Still we are the valiant Franks, who had their dwelling on the eastern banks of the Rhine and of the Saale, who were converted to the Christian faith by the celebrated Clovis, and are sufficient, by our numbers and courage, to reconquer the Holy Land, should all Europe besides stand neutral in the contest."

There are few things more painful to the vanity of a person like the Princess, than the being detected in an egregious error, at the moment she is taking credit to herself for being peculiarly accurately informed.

"A false slave, who knew not what he was saying, I suppose," said the Princess, "imposed upon me the belief that the Varangians were the natural enemies of the Normans. I see him marching there by the side of Achilles Tatius, the leader of his corps.—Call him hither, you officers!—Yonder tall man, I mean, with the battle-axe upon his shoulder."

Hereward, distinguished by his post at the head of the squadron, was summoned from thence to the presence of the Princess, where he made his military obeisance with a cast of sternness in his aspect, as his glance lighted upon the proud look of the Frenchman who rode beside Anna Comnena.

"Did I not understand thee, fellow," said Anna Comnena, "to have informed me, nearly a month ago, that the Normans and the Franks were the same people, and enemies to the race from which you spring?"

"The Normans are our mortal enemies, Lady," answered Hereward, "by whom we were driven from our native land. The Franks are subjects of the same Lord-Paramount with the Normans, and therefore they neither love the Varangians, nor are beloved by them."

"Good fellow," said the French Count, "you do the Franks wrong, and ascribe to the Varan-

gians, although not unnaturally, an undue degree of importance, when you suppose that a race which has ceased to exist as an independent nation for more than a generation, can be either an object of interest or resentment to such as we are."

"I am no stranger," said the Varangian, "to the pride of your heart, or the precedence which you assume over those who have been less fortunate in war than yourselves. It is God who casteth down and who buildeth up, nor is there in the world a prospect to which the Varangians would look forward with more pleasure than that a hundred of their number should meet in a fair field, either with the oppressive Normans, or their modern compatriots, the vain Frenchmen, and let God be the judge which is most worthy of victory."

"You take an insolent advantage of the chance," said the Count of Paris, "which gives you an unlooked-for opportunity to brave a nobleman."

"It is my sorrow and shame," said the Varangian, "that that opportunity is not complete; and that there is a chain around me which forbids me to say, Slay me, or I'll kill thee before we part from this spot!"

"Why, thou foolish and hot-brained churl," replied the Count, "what right hast thou to the honour of dying by my blade? Thou art mad, or hast drained the ale-cup so deeply that thou knowest not what thou thinkest or sayest."

"Thou liest!" said the Varangian; "though such a reproach be the utmost scandal of thy race."

The Frenchman motioned his hand quicker than

light to his sword, but instantly withdrew it, and said with dignity, "thou canst not offend me."

"But thou," said the exile, "hast offended me in a matter which can only be atoned by thy manhood."

"Where and how?" answered the Count; "although it is needless to ask the question, which thou canst not answer rationally."

"Thou hast this day," answered the Varangian, "put a mortal affront upon a great prince, whom thy master calls his ally, and by whom thou hast been received with every rite of hospitality. Him thou hast affronted as one peasant at a merry-making would do shame to another, and this dishonour thou hast done to him in the very face of his own chiefs and princes, and the nobles from every court of Europe."

"It was thy master's part to resent my conduct," said the Frenchman, "if in reality he so much felt it as an affront."

"But that," said Hereward, "did not consist with the manners of his country to do. Besides that, we trusty Varangians esteem ourselves bound by our oath as much to defend our Emperor, while the service lasts, on every inch of his honour as on every foot of his territory; I therefore tell thee, Sir Knight, Sir Count, or whatever thou callest thyself, there is mortal quarrel between thee and the Varangian guard, ever and until thou hast fought it out in fair and manly battle, body to body, with one of the said Imperial Varangians, when

duty and opportunity shall permit:—and so God schaw the right!"

As this passed in the French language, the meaning escaped the understanding of such Imperialists as were within hearing at the time; and the Princess, who waited with some astonishment till the Crusader and the Varangian had finished their conference, when it was over, said to him with interest, "I trust you feel that poor man's situation to be too much at a distance from your own, to admit of your meeting him in what is termed knightly battle?"

"On such a question," said the knight, "I have but one answer to any lady who does not, like my Brenhilda, cover herself with a shield, and bear a sword by her side, and the heart of a knight in her bosom."

"And suppose for once," said the Princess Anna Comnena, "that I possessed such titles to your confidence, what would your answer be to me?"

"There can be little reason for concealing it," said the Count. "The Varangian is a brave man, and a strong one; it is contrary to my vow to shun his challenge, and perhaps I shall derogate from my rank by accepting it; but the world is wide, and he is yet to be born who has seen Robert of Paris shun the face of mortal man. By means of some gallant officer among the Emperor's guards, this poor fellow, who nourishes so strange an ambition, shall learn that he shall have his wish gratified."

"And then?"——said Anna Comnena.

"Why, then," said the Count, "in the poor man's own language, God schaw the right!"

"Which is to say," said the Princess, "that if my father has an officer of his guards honourable enough to forward so pious and reasonable a purpose, the Emperor must lose an ally, in whose faith he puts confidence, or a most trusty and faithful soldier of his personal guard, who has distinguished himself upon many occasions?"

"I am happy to hear," said the Count, "that the man bears such a character. In truth, his ambition ought to have some foundation. The more I think of it, the rather am I of opinion that there is something generous, rather than derogatory, in giving to the poor exile, whose thoughts are so high and noble, those privileges of a man of rank, which some who were born in such lofty station are too cowardly to avail themselves of. Yet despond not, noble Princess; the challenge is not yet accepted of, and if it was, the issue is in the hand of God. As for me, whose trade is war, the sense that I have something so serious to transact with this resolute man, will keep me from other less honourable quarrels, in which a lack of occupation might be apt to involve me."

The Princess made no farther observation, being resolved, by private remonstrance to Achilles Tatius, to engage him to prevent a meeting which might be fatal to the one or the other of two brave men. The town now darkened before them, sparkling, at the same time, through its obscurity, by the

many lights which illuminated the houses of the citizens. The royal cavalcade held their way to the Golden Gate, where the trusty centurion put his guard under arms to receive them.

"We must now break off, fair ladies," said the Count, as the party, having now dismounted, were standing together at the private gate of the Blacquernal Palace, "and find as we can, the lodgings which we occupied last night."

"Under your favour, no," said the Empress. "You must be content to take your supper and repose in quarters more fitting your rank; and," added Irene, "with no worse quartermaster than one of the Imperial family who has been your travelling companion."

This the Count heard, with considerable inclination to accept the hospitality which was so readily offered. Although as devoted as a man could well be to the charms of his Brenhilda, the very idea never having entered his head of preferring another's beauty to hers, yet nevertheless, he had naturally felt himself flattered by the attentions of a woman of eminent beauty and very high rank; and the praises with which the Princess had loaded him, had not entirely fallen to the ground. He was no longer in the humour in which the morning had found him, disposed to outrage the feelings of the Emperor, and to insult his dignity; but, flattered by the adroit sycophancy which the old philosopher had learned from the schools, and the beautiful Princess had been gifted with by nature, he assented to the Empress's proposal; the more readily, per-

haps, that the darkness did not permit him to see that there was distinctly a shade of displeasure on the brow of Brenhilda. Whatever the cause, she cared not to express it, and the married pair had just entered that labyrinth of passages through which Hereward had formerly wandered, when a chamberlain, and a female attendant, richly dressed, bent the knee before them, and offered them the means and place to adjust their attire, ere they entered the Imperial presence. Brenhilda looked upon her apparel and arms, spotted with the blood of the insolent Scythian, and, Amazon as she was, felt the shame of being carelessly and improperly dressed. The arms of the knight were also bloody, and in disarrangement.

"Tell my female squire, Agatha, to give her attendance," said the Countess. "She alone is in the habit of assisting to unarm and to attire me."

"Now, God be praised," thought the Grecian lady of the bedchamber, "that I am not called to a toilet where smiths' hammers and tongs are like to be the instruments most in request!"

"Tell Marcian, my armourer," said the Count, "to attend with the silver and blue suit of plate and mail which I won in a wager from the Count of Tholouse."*

* Raymond Count of Tholouse and St Giles, Duke of Carboune, and Marquis of Provence, an aged warrior who had won high distinction in the contests against the Saracens in Spain, was the chief leader of the Crusaders from the South of France. His title of St Giles is corrupted by Anna Comnena into *Sangeles*, by which name she constantly mentions him in the Alexiad.

"Might I not have the honour of adjusting your armour," said a splendidly drest courtier, with some marks of the armourer's profession, "since I have put on that of the Emperor himself?—may his name be sacred!"

"And how many rivets hast thou clenched upon the occasion with this hand," said the Count, catching hold of it, "which looks as if it had never been washed, save with milk of roses,—and with this childish toy?" pointing to a hammer, with ivory haft and silver head, which, stuck into a milk-white kidskin apron, the official wore as badges of his duty. The armourer fell back in some confusion. "His grasp," he said to another domestic, "is like the seizure of a vice!"

While this little scene passed apart, the Empress Irene, her daughter, and her son-in-law, left the company, under pretence of making a necessary change in their apparel. Immediately after, Agelastes was required to attend the Emperor, and the strangers were conducted to two adjacent chambers of retirement, splendidly fitted up, and placed for the present at their disposal, and that of their attendants. There we shall for a time leave them, assuming, with the assistance of their own attendants, a dress which their ideas regarded as most fit for a great occasion; those of the Grecian court willingly keeping apart from a task which they held nearly as formidable as assisting at the lair of a royal tiger or his bride.

Agelastes found the Emperor sedulously arranging his most splendid court-dress; for, as in the

court of Pekin, the change of ceremonial attire was a great part of the ritual observed at Constantinople.

"Thou hast done well, wise Agelastes," said Alexius to the philosopher, as he approached with abundance of prostrations and genuflexions—"Thou hast done well, and we are content with thee. Less than thy wit and address must have failed in separating from their company this tameless bull, and unyoked heifer, over whom, if we obtain influence, we shall command, by every account, no small interest among those who esteem them the bravest in the host."

"My humble understanding," said Agelastes, "had been infinitely inferior to the management of so prudent and sagacious a scheme, had it not been shaped forth and suggested by the inimitable wisdom of your most sacred Imperial Highness."

"We are aware," said Alexius, "that we had the merit of blocking forth the scheme of detaining these persons, either by their choice as allies, or by main force as hostages. Their friends, ere yet they have missed them, will be engaged in war with the Turks, and at no liberty, if the devil should suggest such an undertaking, to take arms against the sacred empire. Thus, Agelastes, we shall obtain hostages at least as important and as valuable as that Count of Vermandois, whose liberty the tremendous Godfrey of Bouillon extorted from us by threats of instant war."

"Pardon," said Agelastes, "if I add another reason to those which of themselves so happily

support your august resolution. It is possible that we may, by observing the greatest caution and courtesy towards these strangers, win them in good earnest to our side."

"I conceive you, I conceive you"— said the Emperor; "and this very night I will exhibit myself to this Count and his lady in the royal presence chamber, in the richest robes which our wardrobe can furnish. The lions of Solomon shall roar, the golden tree of Comnenus shall display its wonders, and the feeble eyes of these Franks shall be altogether dazzled by the splendour of the empire. These spectacles cannot but sink into their minds, and dispose them to become the allies and servants of a nation so much more powerful, skilful, and wealthy than their own.—Thou hast something to say, Agelastes. Years and long study have made thee wise; though we have given our opinion, thou mayst speak thine own, and live."

Thrice three times did Agelastes press his brow against the hem of the Emperor's garment, and great seemed his anxiety to find such words as might intimate his dissent from his sovereign, yet save him from the informality of contradicting him expressly.

"These sacred words, in which your sacred Highness has uttered your most just and accurate opinions, are undeniable, and incapable of contradiction, were any vain enough to attempt to impugn them. Nevertheless, be it lawful to say, that men show the wisest arguments in vain to those who do not understand reason, just as you would in vain

exhibit a curious piece of limning to the blind, or endeavour to bribe, as scripture saith, a sow by the offer of a precious stone. The fault is not, in such case, in the accuracy of your sacred reasoning, but in the obtuseness and perverseness of the barbarians to whom it is applied."

"Speak more plainly," said the Emperor; "how often must we tell thee, that in cases in which we really want counsel, we know we must be contented to sacrifice ceremony?"

"Then, in plain words," said Agelastes, "these European barbarians are like no others under the cope of the universe, either on the things on which they look with desire, or on those which they consider as discouraging. The treasures of this noble empire, so far as they affected their wishes, would merely inspire them with the desire to go to war with a nation possessed of so much wealth, and who, in their self-conceited estimation, were less able to defend, than they themselves are powerful to assail. Of such a description, for instance, is Bohemond of Tarentum,—and such a one is many a crusader less able and sagacious than he;—for I think, I need not tell your Imperial Divinity, that he holds his own self-interest to be the devoted guide of his whole conduct through this extraordinary war; and that, therefore, you can justly calculate his course, when once you are aware from which point of the compass the wind of avarice and self-interest breathes with respect to him. But there are spirits among the Franks of a very different nature, and who must be acted upon by very different motives, if we would

make ourselves masters of their actions, and the principles by which they are governed. If it were lawful to do so, I would request your Majesty to look at the manner by which an artful juggler of your court achieves his imposition upon the eyes of spectators, yet heedfully disguises the means by which he attains his object. This people—I mean the more lofty-minded of these crusaders, who act up to the pretences of the doctrine which they call chivalry—despise the thirst of gold, and gold itself, unless to hilt their swords, or to furnish forth some necessary expenses, as alike useless and contemptible. The man who can be moved by the thirst of gain, they contemn, scorn, and despise, and liken him, in the meanness of his objects, to the most paltry serf that ever followed the plough, or wielded the spade. On the other hand, if it happens that they actually need gold, they are sufficiently unceremonious in taking it where they can most easily find it. Thus, they are neither easily to be bribed by giving them sums of gold, nor to be starved into compliance by withholding what chance may render necessary for them. In the one case, they set no value upon the gift of a little paltry yellow dross; on the other, they are accustomed to take what they want."

"Yellow dross!" interrupted Alexius. "Do they call that noble metal, equally respected by Roman and barbarian, by rich and poor, by great and mean, by churchmen and laymen, which all mankind are fighting for, plotting for, planning for, intriguing for, and damning themselves for, both

soul and body—by the opprobrious name of yellow dross? They are mad, Agelastes, utterly mad. Perils and dangers, penalties and scourges, are the only arguments to which men who are above the universal influence which moves all others, can possibly be accessible."

"Nor are they," said Agelastes, "more accessible to fear than they are to self-interest. They are indeed, from their boyhood, brought up to scorn those passions which influence ordinary minds, whether by means of avarice to impel, or of fear to hold back. So much is this the case, that what is enticing to other men, must, to interest them, have the piquant sauce of extreme danger. I told, for instance, to this very hero, a legend of a Princess of Zulichium, who lay on an enchanted couch, beautiful as an angel, awaiting the chosen knight who should, by dispelling her enchanted slumbers, become master of her person, of her kingdom of Zulichium, and of her countless treasures; and, would your Imperial Majesty believe me, I could scarce get the gallant to attend to my legend, or take any interest in the adventure, till I assured him he would have to encounter a winged dragon, compared to which the largest of those in the Frank romances was but like a mere dragon-fly?"

"And did this move the gallant?" said the Emperor.

"So much so," replied the philosopher, "that had I not unfortunately, by the earnestness of my description, awakened the jealousy of his Penthesilea of a Countess, he had forgotten the crusade

and all belonging to it, to go in quest of Zalichium and its slumbering sovereign."

"Nay, then," said the Emperor, "we have in our empire (make us sensible of the advantage!) innumerable tale-tellers who are not possessed in the slightest degree of that noble scorn of gold which is proper to the Franks, but shall, for a brace of besants, lie with the devil, and beat him to boot, if in that manner we can gain, as mariners say, the weathergage of the Franks."

"Discretion," said Agelastes, "is in the highest degree necessary. Simply to lie is no very great matter; it is merely a departure from the truth, which is little different from missing a mark at archery, where the whole horizon, one point alone excepted, will alike serve the shooter's purpose; but to move the Frank as is desired, requires a perfect knowledge of his temper and disposition, great caution and presence of mind, and the most versatile readiness in changing from one subject to another. Had I not myself been somewhat alert, I might have paid the penalty of a false step in your Majesty's service, by being flung into my own cascade by the virago whom I offended."

"A perfect Thalestris!" said the Emperor; "I shall take care what offence I give her."

"If I might speak and live," said Agelastes, "the Cæsar Nicephorus Briennius had best adopt the same precaution."

"Nicephorus," said the Emperor, "must settle that with our daughter. I have ever told her that she gives him too much of that history, of which a

page or two is sufficiently refreshing; but by our own self we must swear it, Agelastes, that, night after night, hearing nothing else, would subdue the patience of a saint!—Forget, good Agelastes, that thou hast heard me say such a thing—more especially, remember it not when thou art in presence of our Imperial wife and daughter."

"Nor were the freedoms taken by the Cæsar beyond the bounds of an innocent gallantry," said Agelastes; "but the Countess, I must needs say, is dangerous. She killed this day the Scythian Toxartis, by what seemed a mere fillip on the head."

"Hah!" said the Emperor; "I knew that Toxartis, and he was like enough to deserve his death, being a bold unscrupulous marauder. Take notes, however, how it happened, the names of witnesses, &c., that, if necessary, we may exhibit the fact as a deed of aggression on the part of the Count and Countess of Paris, to the assembly of the crusaders."

"I trust," said Agelastes, "your Imperial Majesty will not easily resign the golden opportunity of gaining to your standard persons whose character stands so very high in chivalry. It would cost you but little to bestow upon them a Grecian island, worth a hundred of their own paltry lordship of Paris; and if it were given under the condition of their expelling the infidels or the disaffected who may have obtained the temporary possession, it would be so much the more likely to be an acceptable offer. I need not say that the whole

knowledge, wisdom, and skill of the poor Agelastes is at your Imperial Majesty's disposal."

The Emperor paused for a moment, and then said, as if on full consideration, "Worthy Agelastes, I dare trust thee in this difficult and somewhat dangerous matter; but I will keep my purpose of exhibiting to them the lions of Solomon, and the golden tree of our Imperial house."

"To that there can be no objection," returned the philosopher; "only remember to exhibit few guards, for these Franks are like a fiery horse; when in temper he may be ridden with a silk thread, but when he has taken umbrage or suspicion, as they would likely do if they saw many armed men, a steel bridle would not restrain him."

"I will be cautious," said the Emperor, "in that particular, as well as others.—Sound the silver bell, Agelastes, that the officers of our wardrobe may attend."

"One single word, while your Highness is alone," said Agelastes. "Will your Imperial Majesty transfer to me the direction of your menagerie, of collection of extraordinary creatures?"

"You make me wonder," said the Emperor, taking a signet, bearing upon it a lion, with the legend, *Vicit Leo ex tribu Judæ*. "This," he said, "will give thee the command of our dens. And now, be candid for once with thy master—for deception is thy nature even with me—By what charm wilt thou subdue these untamed savages?"

"By the power of falsehood," replied Agelastes, with deep reverence.

"I believe thee an adept in it," said the Emperor. "And to which of their foibles wilt thou address it?"

"To their love of fame," said the philosopher; and retreated backwards out of the royal apartment, as the officers of the wardrobe entered to complete the investment of the Emperor in his Imperial habiliments.

CHAPTER XIV.

I will converse with iron-witted fools,
And unrespective boys; none are for me,
That look into me with considerate eyes;—
High-reaching Buckingham grows circumspect.
Richard III.

As they parted from each other, the Emperor and philosopher had each their own anxious thoughts on the interview which had past between them; thoughts which they expressed in broken sentences and ejaculations, though for the better understanding of the degree of estimation in which they held each other, we will give them a more regular and intelligible form.

"Thus, then," half muttered half said Alexius, but so low as to hide his meaning from the officers of the wardrobe, who entered to do their office,—"thus, then, this bookworm—this remnant of old heathen philosophy, who hardly believes, so God save me, the truth of the Christian creed, has topp'd his part so well that he forces his Emperor to dissemble in his presence. Beginning by being the buffoon of the court, he has wormed himself into all its secrets, made himself master of all its intrigues, conspired with my own son-in-law against me, debauched my guards,—indeed so woven his web of deceit, that my life is safe no

longer, than he believes me the Imperial dolt which I have affected to seem, in order to deceive him; fortunate that even so I can escape his cautionary anticipation of my displeasure, by avoiding to precipitate his measures of violence. But were this sudden storm of the crusade fairly passed over, the ungrateful Cæsar, the boastful coward Achilles Tatius, and the bosom serpent Agelastes, shall know whether Alexius Comnenus has been born their dupe. When Greek meets Greek, comes the strife of subtlety, as well as the tug of war." Thus saying, he resigned himself to the officers of his wardrobe, who proceeded to ornament him as the solemnity required.

"I trust him not," said Agelastes, the meaning of whose gestures and exclamations, we, in like manner, render into a connected meaning. "I cannot, and do not trust him—he somewhat overacts his part. He has borne himself upon other occasions with the shrewd wit of his family the Comneni; yet he now trusts to the effect of his trumpery lions upon such a shrewd people as the Franks and Normans, and seems to rely upon me for the character of men with whom he has been engaged in peace and war for many years. This can be but to gain my confidence; for there were imperfect looks, and broken sentences, which seemed to say, 'Agelastes, the Emperor knows thee, and confides not in thee.' Yet the plot is successful and undiscovered, as far as can be judged; and were I to attempt to recede now, I were lost for ever. A little time to carry on this intrigue with the Frank,

when possibly, by the assistance of this gallant, Alexius shall exchange the crown for a cloister, or a still narrower abode; and then, Agelastes, thou deservest to be blotted from the roll of philosophers, if thou canst not push out of the throne the conceited and luxurious Cæsar, and reign in his stead, a second Marcus Antoninus, when the wisdom of thy rule, long unfelt in a world which has been guided by tyrants and voluptuaries, shall soon obliterate recollection of the manner in which thy power was acquired. To work then—be active, and be cautious. The time requires it, and the prize deserves it."

While these thoughts passed through his mind, he arrayed himself, by the assistance of Diogenes, in a clean suit of that simple apparel in which he always frequented the court; a garb as unlike that of a candidate for royalty, as it was a contrast to the magnificent robes with which Alexius was now investing himself.

In their separate apartments, or dressing-rooms, the Count of Paris and his lady put on the best apparel which they had prepared to meet such a chance upon their journey. Even in France, Robert was seldom seen in the peaceful cap and sweeping mantle, whose high plumes and flowing folds were the garb of knights in times of peace. He was now arrayed in a splendid suit of armour, all except the head, which was bare otherwise than as covered by his curled locks. The rest of his person was sheathed in the complete mail of the time, richly inlaid with silver, which contrasted

with the azure in which the steel was damasked. His spurs were upon his heels—his sword was by his side, and his triangular shield was suspended round his neck, bearing, painted upon it, a number of *fleurs-de-lis semées*, as it is called, upon the field, being the origin of those lily flowers which after times reduced to three only; and which were the terror of Europe, until they suffered so many reverses in our own time.

The extreme height of Count Robert's person adapted him for a garb, which had a tendency to make persons of a lower stature appear rather dwarfish and thick when arrayed *cap-à-pie*. The features, with their self-collected composure, and noble contempt of whatever could have astounded or shaken an ordinary mind, formed a well-fitted capital to the excellently proportioned and vigorous frame which they terminated. The Countess was in more peaceful attire; but her robes were short and succinct, like those of one who might be called to hasty exercise. The upper part of her dress consisted of more than one tunic, sitting close to the body, while a skirt, descending from the girdle, and reaching to the ankles, embroidered elegantly but richly, completed an attire which a lady might have worn in much more modern times. Her tresses were covered with a light steel headpiece, though some of them, escaping, played round her face, and gave relief to those handsome features which might otherwise have seemed too formal, if closed entirely within the verge of steel. Over these under-garments was flung a rich velvet

cloak of a deep green colour, descending from the head, where a species of hood was loosely adjusted over the helmet, deeply laced upon its verges and seams, and so long as to sweep the ground behind. A dagger of rich materials ornamented a girdle of curious goldsmith's work, and was the only offensive weapon which, notwithstanding her military occupation, she bore upon this occasion.

The toilet—as modern times would say—of the Countess, was not nearly so soon ended as that of Count Robert, who occupied his time, as husbands of every period are apt to do, in little sub-acid complaints between jest and earnest, upon the dilatory nature of ladies, and the time which they lose in doffing and donning their garments. But when the Countess Brenhilda came forth in the pride of loveliness, from the inner chamber where she had attired herself, her husband, who was still her lover, clasped her to his breast, and expressed his privilege by the kiss which he took as of right from a creature so beautiful. Chiding him for his folly, yet almost returning the kiss which she received, Brenhilda began now to wonder how they were to find their way to the presence of the Emperor.

The query was soon solved, for a gentle knock at the door announced Agelastes, to whom, as best acquainted with the Frankish manners, had been committed, by the Emperor, the charge of introducing the noble strangers. A distant sound, like that of the roaring of a lion, or not unsimilar to a large and deep gong of modern times, intimated the

commencement of the ceremonial. The black slaves upon guard, who, as hath been observed, were in small numbers, stood ranged in their state dresses of white and gold, bearing in one hand a naked sabre, and in the other a torch of white wax, which served to guide the Count and Countess through the passages that led to the interior of the palace, and to the most secret hall of audience.

The door of this *sanctum sanctorum* was lower than usual, a simple stratagem devised by some superstitious officer of the Imperial household, to compel the lofty-crested Frank to lower his body, as he presented himself in the Imperial presence. Robert, when the door flew open, and he discovered in the background the Emperor seated upon his throne amidst a glare of light, which was broken and reflected in ten thousand folds by the jewels with which his vestments were covered, stopt short, and demanded the meaning of introducing him through so low an arch? Agelastes pointed to the Emperor, by way of shifting from himself a question which he could not have answered. The mute, to apologize for his silence, yawned, and showed the loss of his tongue.

"Holy Virgin!" said the Countess, "what can these unhappy Africans have done, to have deserved a condemnation which involves so cruel a fate?"

"The hour of retribution is perhaps come," said the Count, in a displeased tone, while Agelastes, with such hurry as time and place permitted, entered, making his prostrations and genuflexions, little doubting that the Frank must follow him, and

to do so, must lower his body to the Emperor. The Count, however, in the height of displeasure at the trick which he conceived had been intended him, turned himself round, and entered the presence-chamber with his back purposely turned to the sovereign, and did not face Alexius until he reached the middle of the apartment, when he was joined by the Countess, who had made her approach in a more seemly manner. The Emperor, who had prepared to acknowledge the Count's expected homage in the most gracious manner, found himself now even more unpleasantly circumstanced than when this uncompromising Frank had usurped the royal throne in the course of the day.

The officers and nobles who stood around, though a very select number, were more numerous than usual, as the meeting was not held for counsel, but merely for state. These assumed such an appearance of mingled displeasure and confusion as might best suit with the perplexity of Alexius, while the wily features of the Norman-Italian, Bohemond of Tarentum, who was also present, had a singular mixture of fantastical glee and derision. It is the misfortune of the weaker on such occasions, or at least the more timid, to be obliged to take the petty part of winking hard, as if not able to see what they cannot avenge.

Alexius made the signal that the ceremonial of the grand reception should immediately commence. Instantly the lions of Solomon, which had been newly furbished, raised their heads, erected their manes, brandished their tails, until they excited the

imagination of Count Robert, who, being already on fire at the circumstances of his reception, conceived the bellowing of these automata to be the actual announciation of immediate assault. Whether the lions, whose forms he beheld, were actually lords of the forest,—whether they were mortals who had suffered transformation,—whether they were productions of the skill of an artful juggler, or profound naturalist, the Count neither knew nor cared. All that he thought of the danger was, that it was worthy of his courage; nor did his heart permit him a moment's irresolution. He strode to the nearest lion, which seemed in the act of springing up, and said, in a tone loud and formidable as its own, "How now, dog!" At the same time he struck the figure with his clenched fist and steel gauntlet with so much force, that its head burst, and the steps and carpet of the throne were covered with wheels, springs, and other machinery, which had been the means of producing its mimic terrors.

On this display of the real nature of the cause of his anger, Count Robert could not but feel a little ashamed of having given way to passion on such an occasion. He was still more confused when Bohemond, descending from his station near the Emperor, addressed him in the Frank language;—"You have done a gallant deed, truly, Count Robert, in freeing the court of Byzantium from an object of fear which has long been used to frighten peevish children and unruly barbarians!"

Enthusiasm has no greater enemy than ridicule.

"Why, then," said Count Robert, blushing deeply at the same time, "did they exhibit its fantastic terrors to me? I am neither child nor barbarian."

"Address yourself to the Emperor, then, as an intelligent man," answered Bohemond. "Say something to him in excuse of your conduct, and show that our bravery has not entirely run away with our common sense. And hark you also, while I have a moment's speech of you,—do you and your wife heedfully follow my example at supper!" These words were spoken with a significant tone and corresponding look.

The opinion of Bohemond, from his long intercourse, both in peace and war, with the Grecian Emperor, gave him great influence with the other crusaders, and Count Robert yielded to his advice. He turned towards the Emperor with something liker an obeisance than he had hitherto paid. "I crave your pardon," he said, "for breaking that gilded piece of pageantry; but, in sooth, the wonders of sorcery, and the portents of accomplished and skilful jugglers, are so numerous in this country, that one does not clearly distinguish what is true from what is false, or what is real from what is illusory."

The Emperor, notwithstanding the presence of mind for which he was remarkable, and the courage in which he was not held by his countrymen to be deficient, received this apology somewhat awkwardly. Perhaps the rueful complaisance with which he accepted the Count's apology, might be

best compared to that of a lady of the present day when an awkward guest has broken a valuable piece of china. He muttered something about the machines having been long preserved in the Imperial family, as being made on the model of those which guarded the throne of the wise King of Israel; to which the blunt plain-spoken Count expressed his doubt in reply, whether the wisest prince in the world ever condescended to frighten his subjects or guests by the mimic roarings of a wooden lion. "If," said he, "I too hastily took it for a living creature, I have had the worst, by damaging my excellent gauntlet in dashing to pieces its timber skull."

The Emperor, after a little more had been said, chiefly on the same subject, proposed that they should pass to the banquet-room. Marshalled, accordingly, by the grand sewer of the Imperial table, and attended by all present, excepting the Emperor and the immediate members of his family, the Frankish guests were guided through a labyrinth of apartments, each of which was filled with wonders of nature and art, calculated to enhance their opinion of the wealth and grandeur which had assembled together so much that was wonderful. Their passage being necessarily slow and interrupted, gave the Emperor time to change his dress, according to the ritual of his court, which did not permit his appearing twice in the same vesture before the same spectators. He took the opportunity to summon Agelastes into his presence, and, that their conference might be secret, he used, in

assisting his toilet, the agency of some of the mutes destined for the service of the interior.

The temper of Alexius Comnenus was considerably moved, although it was one of the peculiarities of his situation to be ever under the necessity of disguising the emotions of his mind, and of affecting, in presence of his subjects, a superiority to human passion, which he was far from feeling. It was therefore with gravity, and even reprehension, that he asked, "By whose error it was that the wily Bohemond, half-Italian, and half-Norman, was present at this interview? Surely, if there be one in the crusading army likely to conduct that foolish youth and his wife behind the scenes of the exhibition by which we hoped to impose upon them, the Count of Tarentum, as he entitles himself, is that person."

"It was that old man," said Agelastes, "(if I may reply and live,) Michael Cantacuzene, who deemed that his presence was peculiarly desired; but he returns to the camp this very night."

"Yes," said Alexius, "to inform Godfrey, and the rest of the crusaders, that one of the boldest and most highly esteemed of their number is left, with his wife, a hostage in our Imperial city, and to bring back, perhaps, an alternative of instant war, unless they are delivered up!"

"If it is your Imperial Highness's will to think so," said Agelastes, "you can suffer Count Robert and his wife to return to the camp with the Italian-Norman."

"What?" answered the Emperor, "and so lose

all the fruits of an enterprise, the preparations for which have already cost us so much in actual expense; and, were our heart made of the same stuff with that of ordinary mortals, would have cost us so much more in vexation and anxiety? No, no; issue warning to the crusaders, who are still on the hither side, that farther rendering of homage is dispensed with, and that they repair to the quays on the banks of the Bosphorus, by peep of light to-morrow. Let our admiral, as he values his head, pass every man of them over to the farther side before noon. Let there be largesses, a princely banquet on the farther bank—all that may increase their anxiety to pass. Then, Agelastes, we will trust to ourselves to meet this additional danger, either by bribing the venality of Bohemond, or by bidding defiance to the crusaders. Their forces are scattered, and the chief of them, with the leaders themselves, are all now—or by far the greater part—on the east side of the Bosphorus.—And now to the banquet! seeing that the change of dress has been made sufficient to answer the statutes of the household; since our ancestors chose to make rules for exhibiting us to our subjects, as priests exhibit their images at their shrines!"

"Under grant of life," said Agelastes, "it was not done inconsiderately, but in order that the Emperor, ruled ever by the same laws from father to son, might ever be regarded as something beyond the common laws of humanity—the divine image of a saint, therefore, rather than a human being."

"We know it, good Agelastes," answered the

Emperor, with a smile, "and we are also aware, that many of our subjects, like the worshippers of Bel in holy writ, treat us so far as an image, as to assist us in devouring the revenues of our provinces, which are gathered in our name, and for our use. These things we now only touch lightly, the time not suiting them."

Alexius left the secret council accordingly, after the order for the passage of the crusaders had been written out and subscribed in due form, and in the sacred ink of the Imperial chancery.

Mean time, the rest of the company had arrived in a hall, which, like the other apartments in the palace, was most tastefully as well as gorgeously fitted up, except that a table, which presented a princely banquet, might have been deemed faulty in this respect, that the dishes, which were most splendid, both in the materials of which they were composed, and in the viands which they held, were elevated by means of feet, so as to be upon a level with female guests as they sat, and with men as they lay recumbent at the banquet which it offered.

Around stood a number of black slaves richly attired, while the grand sewer, Michael Cantacuzene, arranged the strangers with his golden wand, and conveyed orders to them, by signs, that all should remain standing around the table, until a signal should be given.

The upper end of the board, thus furnished, and thus surrounded, was hidden by a curtain of muslin and silver, which fell from the top of the arch under which the upper part seemed to pass. On this cur-

tain the sewer kept a wary eye; and when he observed it slightly shake, he waved his wand of office, and all expected the result.

As if self-moved, the mystic curtain arose, and discovered behind it a throne eight steps higher than the end of the table, decorated in the most magnificent manner, and having placed before it a small table of ivory inlaid with silver, behind which was seated Alexius Comnenus, in a dress entirely different from what he had worn in the course of the day, and so much more gorgeous than his former vestments, that it seemed not unnatural that his subjects should prostrate themselves before a figure so splendid. His wife, his daughter, and his son-in-law the Cæsar, stood behind him with faces bent to the ground, and it was with deep humility, that, descending from the throne at the Emperor's command, they mingled with the guests of the lower table, and, exalted as they were, proceeded to the festive board at the signal of the grand sewer. So that they could not be said to partake of the repast with the Emperor, nor to be placed at the Imperial table, although they supped in his presence, and were encouraged by his repeated request to them to make good cheer. No dishes presented at the lower table were offered at the higher; but wines, and more delicate sorts of food, which arose before the Emperor as if by magic, and seemed designed for his own proper use, were repeatedly sent, by his special directions, to one or other of the guests whom Alexius delighted to honour—among these the Franks being particularly distinguished.

The behaviour of Bohemond was on this occasion particularly remarkable.

Count Robert, who kept an eye upon him, both from his recent words, and owing to an expressive look which he once or twice darted towards him, observed, that in no liquors or food, not even those sent from the Emperor's own table, did this astucious prince choose to indulge. A piece of bread, taken from the canister at random, and a glass of pure water, was the only refreshment of which he was pleased to partake. His alleged excuse was, the veneration due to the Holy Festival of the Advent, which chanced to occur that very night, and which both the Greek and Latin rule agreed to hold sacred.

"I had not expected this of you, Sir Bohemond," said the Emperor, "that you should have refused my personal hospitality at my own board, on the very day on which you honoured me by entering into my service as vassal for the principality of Antioch."

"Antioch is not yet conquered," said Sir Bohemond; "and conscience, dread sovereign, must always have its exceptions, in whatever temporal contracts we may engage."

"Come, gentle Count," said the Emperor, who obviously regarded Bohemond's inhospitable humour as something arising more from suspicion than devotion, "we invite, though it is not our custom, our children, our noble guests, and our principal officers here present, to a general carouse. Fill the cups, called the Nine Muses! let them be brimful of

the wine which is said to be sacred to the Imperial lips!"

At the Emperor's command the cups were filled; they were of pure gold, and there was richly engraved upon each the effigy of the Muse to whom it was dedicated.

"You at least," said the Emperor, "my gentle Count Robert, you and your lovely lady, will not have any scruple to pledge your Imperial host?"

"If that scruple is to imply suspicion of the provisions with which we are here served, I disdain to nourish such," said Count Robert. "If it is a sin which I commit by tasting wine to-night, it is a venial one; nor shall I greatly augment my load by carrying it, with the rest of my trespasses, to the next confessional."

"Will you then, Prince Bohemond, not be ruled by the conduct of your friend?" said the Emperor.

"Methinks," replied the Norman-Italian, "my friend might have done better to have been ruled by mine; but be it as his wisdom pleases. The flavour of such exquisite wine is sufficient for me."

So saying, he emptied the wine into another goblet, and seemed alternately to admire the carving of the cup, and the flavour of what it had lately contained.

"You are right, Sir Bohemond," said the Emperor; "the fabric of that cup is beautiful; it was done by one of the ancient gravers of Greece. The boasted cup of Nestor, which Homer has handed down to us, was a good deal larger perhaps, but neither equalled these in the value of the material,

nor the exquisite beauty of the workmanship. Let each one, therefore, of my stranger guests, accept of the cup which he either has or might have drunk out of, as a recollection of me; and may the expedition against the infidels be as propitious as their confidence and courage deserve!"

"If I accept your gift, mighty Emperor," said Bohemond, "it is only to atone for the apparent discourtesy, when my devotion compels me to decline your Imperial pledge, and to show you that we part on the most intimate terms of friendship."

So saying, he bowed deeply to the Emperor, who answered him with a smile, into which was thrown a considerable portion of sarcastic expression.

"And I," said the Count of Paris, "having taken upon my conscience the fault of meeting your Imperial pledge, may stand excused from incurring the blame of aiding to dismantle your table of these curious drinking cups. We empty them to your health, and we cannot in any other respect profit by them."

"But Prince Bohemond can," said the Emperor; "to whose quarters they shall be carried, sanctioned by your generous use. And we have still a set for you, and for your lovely Countess, equal to that of the Graces, though no longer matching in number the nymphs of Parnassus.—The evening bell rings, and calls us to remember the hour of rest, that we may be ready to meet the labours of to-morrow."

The party then broke up for the evening. Bohemond left the palace that night, not forgetting the

Muses, of whom he was not in general a devotee. The result was, as the wily Greek had intended, that he had established between Bohemond and the Count, not indeed a quarrel, but a kind of difference of opinion; Bohemond feeling that the fiery Count of Paris must think his conduct sordid and avaricious, while Count Robert was far less inclined than before to rely on him as a counsellor.

CHAPTER XV.

THE Count of Paris and his lady were that night lodged in the Imperial Palace of Blacquernal. Their apartments were contiguous, but the communication between them was cut off for the night by the mutual door being locked and barred. They marvelled somewhat at this precaution. The observance, however, of the festival of the church, was pleaded as an admissible, and not unnatural excuse for this extraordinary circumstance. Neither the Count nor his lady entertained, it may be believed, the slightest personal fear for any thing which could happen to them. Their attendants, Marcian and Agatha, having assisted their master and mistress in the performance of their usual offices, left them, in order to seek the places of repose assigned to them among persons of their degree.

The preceding day had been one of excitation, and of much bustle and interest; perhaps, also, the wine, sacred to the Imperial lips, of which Count Robert had taken a single, indeed, but a deep draught, was more potent than the delicate and high-flavoured juice of the Gascogne grape, to which he was accustomed; at any rate, it seemed to him that, from the time he felt that he had slept, daylight ought to have been broad in his chamber when

he awaked, and yet it was still darkness almost palpable. Somewhat surprised, he gazed eagerly around, but could discern nothing, except two balls of red light which shone from among the darkness with a self-emitted brilliancy, like the eyes of a wild animal while it glares upon its prey. The Count started from bed to put on his armour, a necessary precaution if what he saw should really be a wild creature and at liberty; but the instant he stirred, a deep growl was uttered, such as the Count had never heard, but which might be compared to the sound of a thousand monsters at once; and, as the symphony, was heard the clash of iron chains, and the springing of a monstrous creature towards the bedside, which appeared, however, to be withheld by some fastening from attaining the end of its bound. The roars which it uttered now ran thick on each other. They were most tremendous, and must have been heard throughout the whole palace. The creature seemed to gather itself many yards nearer to the bed than by its glaring eyeballs it appeared at first to be stationed, and how much nearer, or what degree of motion, might place him within the monster's reach, the Count was totally uncertain. Its breathing was even heard, and Count Robert thought he felt the heat of its respiration, while his defenceless limbs might not be two yards distant from the fangs which he heard grinding against each other, and the claws which tore up fragments of wood from the oaken floor. The Count of Paris was one of the bravest men who lived in a time when bravery was the

universal property of all who claimed a drop of noble blood, and the knight was a descendant of Charlemagne. He was, however, a man, and therefore cannot be said to have endured unappalled a sense of danger so unexpected and so extraordinary. But his was not a sudden alarm or panic, it was a calm sense of extreme peril, qualified by a resolution to exert his faculties to the uttermost, to save his life if it were possible. He withdrew himself within the bed, no longer a place of rest, being thus a few feet further from the two glaring eyeballs which remained so closely fixed upon him, that, in spite of his courage, nature painfully suggested the bitter imagination of his limbs being mangled, torn, and churned with their life-blood, in the jaws of some monstrous beast of prey. One saving thought alone presented itself—this might be a trial, an experiment of the philosopher Agelastes, or of the Emperor his master, for the purpose of proving the courage of which the Christians vaunted so highly, and punishing the thoughtless insult which the Count had been unadvised enough to put upon the Emperor the preceding day.

"Well is it said," he reflected in his agony, "beard not the lion in his den! Perhaps even now some base slave deliberates whether I have yet tasted enough of the preliminary agonies of death, and whether he shall yet slip the chain which keeps the savage from doing his work. But come death when it will, it shall never be said that Count Robert was heard to receive it with prayers for compassion, or with cries of pain or terror." He

turned his face to the wall, and waited, with a strong mental exertion, the death which he conceived to be fast approaching.

His first feelings had been unavoidably of a selfish nature. The danger was too instant, and of a description too horrible, to admit of any which involved a more comprehensive view of his calamity; and other reflections of a more distant kind, were at first swallowed up in the all-engrossing thought of immediate death. But as his ideas became clearer, the safety of his Countess rushed upon his mind—what might she now be suffering! and, while he was subjected to a trial so extraordinary, for what were her weaker frame and female courage reserved? Was she still within a few yards of him, as when he lay down the last night? or had the barbarians, who had devised for him a scene so cruel, availed themselves of his and his lady's incautious confidence, to inflict upon her some villainy of the same kind, or even yet more perfidious? Did she sleep or wake, or could she sleep within the close hearing of that horrible cry, which shook all around? He resolved to utter her name, warning her, if possible, to be upon her guard, and to answer without venturing rashly into the apartment which contained a guest so horribly perilous.

He uttered, therefore, his wife's name, but in trembling accents, as if he had been afraid of the savage beast overhearing him.

"Brenhilda! Brenhilda!—there is danger—awake, and speak to me, but do not arise." There was no answer.—"What am I become," he said to

himself, "that I call upon Brenhilda of Aspramonte, like a child on its sleeping nurse, and all because there is a wild cat in the same room with me? Shame on thee, Count of Paris! Let thy arms be rent, and thy spurs be hacked from thy heels!—What ho!" he cried aloud, but still with a tremulous voice, "Brenhilda, we are beset, the foe are upon us!—Answer me, but stir not."

A deep growl from the monster which garrisoned his apartment was the only answer. The sound seemed to say, "Thou hast no hope!" and it ran to the knight's bosom as the genuine expression of despair.

"Perhaps, however, I am still too cold in making my misery known. What, ho! my love! Brenhilda!"

A voice, hollow and disconsolate as that which might have served an inhabitant of the grave, answered as if from a distance. "What disconsolate wretch art thou, who expectest that the living can answer thee from the habitations of the dead?"

"I am a Christian man, a free noble of the kingdom of France," answered the Count. "Yesterday the captain of five hundred men, the bravest in France—the bravest, that is, who breathe mortal air,—and I am here without a glimpse of light, to direct me how to avoid the corner in which lies a wild tiger-cat, prompt to spring upon and to devour me."

"Thou art an example," replied the voice, "and wilt not long be the last, of the changes of fortune,

I, who am now suffering in my third year, was that mighty Ursel, who rivalled Alexius Comnenus for the crown of Greece, was betrayed by my confederates, and being deprived of that eyesight which is the chief blessing of humanity, I inhabit these vaults, no distant neighbour of the wild animals by whom they are sometimes occupied, and whose cries of joy I hear when unfortunate victims like thyself are delivered up to their fury."

"Didst thou not then hear," said Count Robert, in return, "a warlike guest and his bride conducted hither last night, with sounds as it might seem of bridal music?—O, Brenhilda! hast thou, so young—so beautiful—been so treacherously done to death by means so unutterably horrible!"

"Think not," answered Ursel, as the voice had called its owner, "that the Greeks pamper their wild beasts on such lordly fare. For their enemies, which term includes not only all that are really such, but all those whom they fear or hate, they have dungeons whose locks never revolve; hot instruments of steel, to sear the eyeballs in the head; lions and tigers, when it pleases them to make a speedy end of their captives—but these are only for the male prisoners. While for the women—if they be young and beautiful, the princes of the land have places in their bed and bower; nor are they employed, like the captives of Agamemnon's host, to draw water from an Argive spring, but are admired and adored by those whom fate has made the lords of their destiny."

"Such shall never be the doom of Brenhilda!"

exclaimed Count Robert; "her husband still lives to assist her, and should he die, she knows well how to follow him without leaving a blot in the epitaph of either."

The captive did not immediately reply, and a short pause ensued, which was broken by Ursel's voice. "Stranger," he said, "what noise is that I hear?"

"Nay, I hear nothing," said Count Robert.

"But I do," said Ursel. "The cruel deprivation of my eyesight renders my other senses more acute."

"Disquiet not thyself about the matter, fellow-prisoner," answered the Count, "but wait the event in silence."

Suddenly a light arose in the apartment, lurid, red, and smoky. The knight had bethought him of a flint and match which he usually carried about him, and with as little noise as possible had lighted the torch by the bedside; this he instantly applied to the curtains of the bed, which being of thin muslin, were in a moment in flames. The knight sprung, at the same instant, from his bed. The tiger, for such it was, terrified at the flame, leaped backwards as far as his chain would permit, heedless of any thing save this new object of terror. Count Robert upon this seized on a massive wooden stool, which was the only offensive weapon on which he could lay his hand, and, marking at those eyes which now reflected the blaze of fire, and which had recently seemed so appalling, he discharged against them this fragment of ponderous oak, with

a force which less resembled human strength than the impetus with which an engine hurls a stone. He had employed his instant of time so well, and his aim was so true, that the missile went right to the mark and with incredible force. The skull of the tiger, which might be, perhaps, somewhat exaggerated if described as being of the very largest size, was fractured by the blow, and with the assistance of his dagger, which had fortunately been left with him, the French Count despatched the monster, and had the satisfaction to see him grin his last, and roll, in the agony of death, those eyes which were lately so formidable.

Looking around him, he discovered, by the light of the fire which he had raised, that the apartment in which he now lay was different from that in which he had gone to bed overnight; nor could there be a stronger contrast between the furniture of both, than the flickering half-burnt remains of the thin muslin curtains, and the strong, bare, dungeon-looking walls of the room itself, or the very serviceable wooden stool, of which he had made such good use.

The knight had no leisure to form conclusions upon such a subject. He hastily extinguished the fire, which had, indeed, nothing that it could lay hold of, and proceeded, by the light of the flambeau, to examine the apartment, and its means of entrance. It is scarce necessary to say, that he saw no communication with the room of Brenhilda, which convinced him that they had been separated the evening before under pretence of devotional

scruples, in order to accomplish some most villainous design upon one or both of them. His own part of the night's adventure we have already seen; and success so far, over so formidable a danger, gave him a trembling hope that Brenhilda, by her own worth and valour, would be able to defend herself against all attacks of fraud or force, until he could find his way to her rescue. "I should have paid more regard," he said, "to Bohemond's caution last night, who, I think, intimated to me as plainly as if he had spoke it in direct terms, that that same cup of wine was a drugged potion. But then, fie upon him for an avaricious hound! how was it possible I should think he suspected any such thing, when he spoke not out like a man, but, for sheer coldness of heart, or base self-interest, suffered me to run the risk of being poisoned by the wily despot?"

Here he heard a voice from the same quarter as before. "Ho, there! Ho, stranger! Do you live, or have you been murdered? What means this stifling smell of smoke? For God's sake, answer him who can receive no information from eyes closed, alas, for ever!"

"I am at liberty," said the Count, "and the monster destined to devour me has groaned its last. I would, my friend Ursel, since such is thy name, thou hadst the advantage of thine eyes, to have borne witness to yonder combat; it had been worth thy while, though thou shouldst have lost them a minute afterwards, and it would have greatly

advantaged whoever shall have the task of compiling my history."

While he gave a thought to that vanity which strongly ruled him, he lost no time in seeking some mode of escape from the dungeon, for by that means only might he hope to recover his Countess. At last he found an entrance in the wall, but it was strongly locked and bolted. "I have found the passage," he called out; "and its direction is the same in which thy voice is heard—But how shall I undo the door?"

"I'll teach thee that secret," said Ursel. "I would I could as easily unlock each bolt that withholds us from the open air; but, as for thy seclusion within the dungeon, heave up the door by main strength, and thou shalt lift the locks to a place where, pushing then the door from thee, the fastenings will find a grooved passage in the wall, and the door itself will open. Would that I could indeed see thee, not only because, being a gallant man, thou must be a goodly sight, but also because I should thereby know that I was not caverned in darkness for ever."

While he spoke thus, the Count made a bundle of his armour, from which he missed nothing except his sword, Tranchefer, and then proceeded to try what efforts he could make, according to the blind man's instructions, to open the door of his prison-house. Pushing in a direct line was, he soon found, attended with no effect; but when he applied his gigantic strength, and raised the door as high as it would go, he had the satisfaction to

find that the bolts yielded, though reluctantly. A space had been cut so as to allow them to move out of the socket into which they had been forced; and without the turn of a key, but by a powerful thrust forwards, a small passage was left open. The knight entered, bearing his armour in his hand.

"I hear thee," said Ursel, "O stranger! and am aware thou art come into my place of captivity. For three years have I been employed in cutting these grooves, corresponding to the sockets which hold these iron bolts, and preserving the knowledge of the secret from the prison-keepers. Twenty such bolts, perhaps, must be sawn through, ere my steps shall approach the upper air. What prospect is there that I shall have strength of mind sufficient to continue the task? Yet, credit me, noble stranger, I rejoice in having been thus far aiding to thy deliverance; for if Heaven blesses not, in any farther degree, our aspirations after freedom, we may still be a comfort to each other, while tyranny permits our mutual life."

Count Robert looked around, and shuddered that a human being should talk of any thing approaching to comfort, connected with his residence in what seemed a living tomb. Ursel's dungeon was not above twelve feet square, vaulted in the roof, and strongly built in the walls by stones which the chisel had mortiсed closely together. A bed, a coarse footstool, like that which Robert had just launched at the head of the tiger, and a table of equally massive materials, were its only articles of

furniture. On a long stone, above the bed, were these few, but terrible words :—" Zedekias Ursel, imprisoned here on the Ides of March, A. D. ——. Died and interred on the spot"—A blank was left for filling up the period. The figure of the captive could hardly be discerned amid the wildness of his dress and dishabille. The hair of his head, uncut and uncombed, descended in elf-locks, and mingled with a beard of extravagant length.

" Look on me," said the captive, " and rejoice that thou canst yet see the wretched condition to which iron-hearted tyranny can reduce a fellow-creature, both in mortal existence and in future hope."

" Was it thou," said Count Robert, whose blood ran cold in his veins, " that hadst the heart to spend thy time in sawing through the blocks of stone by which these bolts are secured?"

" Alas !" said Ursel, " what could a blind man do? Busy I must be, if I would preserve my senses. Great as the labour was, it was to me the task of three years ; nor can you wonder that I should have devoted to it my whole time, when I had no other means of occupying it. Perhaps, and most likely, my dungeon does not admit the distinction of day and night ; but a distant cathedral clock told me how hour after hour fled away, and found me expending them in rubbing one stone against another. But when the door gave way, I found I had only cut an access into a prison more strong than that which held me. I rejoice, nevertheless, since

it has brought us together, given thee an entrance to my dungeon, and me a companion in my misery."

"Think better than that," said Count Robert, "think of liberty—think of revenge! I cannot believe such unjust treachery will end successfully, else needs must I say, the heavens are less just than priests tell us of. How art thou supplied with food in this dungeon of thine?"

"A warder," said Ursel, "and who, I think, understands not the Greek language—at least he never either answers or addresses me—brings a loaf and a pitcher of water, enough to supply my miserable life till two days are past. I must, therefore, pray that you will retire for a space into the next prison, so that the warder may have no means of knowing that we can hold correspondence together."

"I see not," said Count Robert, "by what access the barbarian, if he is one, can enter my dungeon without passing through yours; but no matter, I will retire into the inner or outer room, whichever it happens to be, and be thou then well aware that the warder will have some one to grapple with ere he leaves his prison-work to-day. Meanwhile, think thyself dumb as thou art blind, and be assured that the offer of freedom itself would not induce me to desert the cause of a companion in adversity."

"Alas," said the old man, "I listen to thy promises as I should to those of the morning gale, which tells me that the sun is about to arise, although I know that I at least shall never behold

it. Thou art one of those wild and undespairing knights, whom for so many years the west of Europe hath sent forth to attempt impossibilities, and from thee, therefore, I can only hope for such a fabric of relief as an idle boy would blow out of soap bubbles."

"Think better of us, old man," said Count Robert, retiring; "at least let me die with my blood warm, and believing it possible for me to be once more united to my beloved Brenhilda."

So saying, he retired into his own cell, and replaced the door, so that the operations of Ursel, which indeed were only such as three years solitude could have achieved, should escape observation when again visited by the warder. "It is ill luck," said he, when once more within his own prison—for that in which the tiger had been secured, he instinctively concluded to be destined for him—"It is ill luck that I had not found a young and able fellow-captive, instead of one decrepit by imprisonment, blind, and broken down past exertion. But God's will be done! I will not leave behind me the poor wretch whom I have found in such a condition, though he is perfectly unable to assist me in accomplishing my escape, and is rather more likely to retard it. Mean time, before we put out the torch, let us see, if, by close examination, we can discover any door in the wall save that to the blind man's dungeon. If not, I much suspect that my descent has been made through the roof. That cup of wine—that Muse, as they called it, had a

taste more like medicine than merry companions' pledge."

He began accordingly a strict survey of the walls, which he resolved to conclude by extinguishing the torch, that he might take the person who should enter his dungeon darkling and by surprise. For a similar reason, he dragged into the darkest corner the carcass of the tiger, and covered it with the remains of the bed-clothes, swearing, at the same time, that a half tiger should be his crest in future, if he had the fortune, which his bold heart would not suffer him to doubt, of getting through the present danger. "But," he added, "if these necromantic vassals of hell shall raise the devil upon me, what shall I do then? And so great is the chance, that methinks I would fain dispense with extinguishing the flambeau. Yet it is childish for one dubbed in the chapel of Our Lady of the Broken Lances, to make much difference between a light room and a dark one. Let them come, as many fiends as the cell can hold, and we shall see if we receive them not as becomes a Christian knight; and surely, Our Lady, to whom I was ever a true votary, will hold it an acceptable sacrifice that I tore myself from my Brenhilda, even for a single moment, in honour of her advent, and thus led the way for our woful separation. Fiends! I defy ye in the body as in the spirit, and I retain the remains of this flambeau until some more convenient opportunity." He dashed it against the wall as he spoke, and then quietly sat down in a corner, to watch what should next happen.

Thought after thought chased each other through his mind. His confidence in his wife's fidelity, and his trust in her uncommon strength and activity, were the greatest comforts which he had; nor could her danger present itself to him in any shape so terrible, but that he found consolation in these reflections: "She is pure," he said, "as the dew of heaven, and heaven will not abandon its own."

CHAPTER XVI.

Strange ape of man! who loathes thee while he scorns thee;
Half a reproach to us and half a jest.
What fancies can be ours ere we have pleasure
In viewing our own form, our pride and passions,
Reflected in a shape grotesque as thine!

Anonymous.

COUNT ROBERT OF PARIS having ensconced himself behind the ruins of the bed, so that he could not well be observed, unless a strong light was at once flung upon the place of his retreat, waited with anxiety how and in what manner the warder of the dungeon, charged with the task of bringing food to the prisoners, should make himself visible; nor was it long ere symptoms of his approach began to be heard and observed.

A light was partially seen, as from a trap-door opening in the roof, and a voice was heard to utter these words in Anglo-Saxon, "Leap, sirrah; come, no delay; leap, my good Sylvan, show your honour's activity." A strange chuckling hoarse voice, in a language totally unintelligible to Count Robert, was heard to respond, as if disputing the orders which were received.

"What, sir," said his companion, "you must contest the point, must you? Nay, if thou art so lazy, I must give your honour a ladder, and perhaps

a kick to hasten your journey." Something then, of very great size, in the form of a human being, jumped down from the trap-door, though the height might be above fourteen feet. This figure was gigantic, being upwards of seven feet high. In its left hand it held a torch, and in its right a skein of fine silk, which unwinding itself as it descended, remained unbroken, though it was easy to conceive it could not have afforded a creature so large any support in his descent from the roof. He alighted with perfect safety and activity upon his feet, and, as if rebounding from the floor, he sprung upwards again, so as almost to touch the roof. In this last gambaud the torch which he bore was extinguished; but this extraordinary warder whirled it round his head with infinite velocity, so that it again ignited. The bearer, who appeared to intend the accomplishment of this object, endeavoured to satisfy himself that it was really attained, by approaching, as if cautiously, its left hand to the flame of the torch. This practical experiment seemed attended with consequences which the creature had not expected, for it howled with pain, shaking the burnt hand, and chattering as if bemoaning itself.

"Take heed there, Sylvanus!" said the same voice in Anglo-Saxon, and in a tone of rebuke. "Ho, there! mind thy duty, Sylvan! Carry food to the blind man, and stand not there to play thyself, lest I trust thee not again alone on such an errand!"

The creature—for it would have been rash to have termed it a man—turning its eye upwards to

the place from whence the voice came, answered with a dreadful grin and shaking of its fist, yet presently began to undo a parcel, and rummage in the pockets of a sort of jerkin and pantaloons which it wore, seeking, it appeared, a bunch of keys, which at length it produced, while it took from the pocket a loaf of bread. Heating the stone of the wall, it affixed the torch to it by a piece of wax, and then cautiously looked out for the entrance to the old man's dungeon, which it opened with a key selected from the bunch. Within the passage it seemed to look for and discover the handle of a pump, at which it filled a pitcher that it bore, and bringing back the fragments of the former loaf, and remains of the pitcher of water, it eat a little, as if it were in sport, and very soon making a frightful grimace, flung the fragments away. The Count of Paris, in the meanwhile, watched anxiously the proceedings of this unknown animal. His first thought was, that the creature, whose limbs were so much larger than humanity, whose grimaces were so frightful, and whose activity seemed supernatural, could be no other than the Devil himself, or some of his imps, whose situation and office in those gloomy regions seemed by no means hard to conjecture. The human voice, however, which he had heard, was less that of a necromancer conjuring a fiend than that of a person giving commands to a wild animal, over whom he had, by training, obtained a great superiority.

"A shame on it," said the Count, "if I suffer a common jackanapes,—for such I take this devil-

seeming beast to be, although twice as large as any of its fellows whom I have ever seen,—to throw an obstacle in the way of my obtaining daylight and freedom! Let us but watch, and the chance is that we make that furry gentleman our guide to the upper regions.

Mean time the creature, which rummaged about everywhere, at length discovered the body of the tiger,—touched it, stirred it, with many strange motions, and seemed to lament and wonder at its death. At once it seemed struck with the idea that some one must have slain it, and Count Robert had the mortification to see it once more select the key, and spring towards the door of Ursel's prison with such alacrity, that had its intention been to strangle him, it would have accomplished its purpose before the interference of Count Robert could have prevented its revenge taking place. Apparently, however, it reflected, that for reasons which seemed satisfactory, the death of the tiger could not be caused by the unfortunate Ursel, but had been accomplished by some one concealed within the outer prison.

Slowly grumbling, therefore, and chattering to itself, and peeping anxiously into every corner, the tremendous creature, so like, yet so very unlike to the human form, came stealing along the walls, moving whatever he thought could seclude a man from his observation. Its extended legs and arms were protruded forward with great strides, and its sharp eyes, on the watch to discover the object of

its search, kept prying, with the assistance of the torch, into every corner.

Considering the vicinity of Alexius's collection of animals, the reader, by this time, can have little doubt that the creature in question, whose appearance seemed to the Count of Paris so very problematical, was a specimen of that gigantic species of ape—if it is not indeed some animal more nearly allied to ourselves—to which, I believe, naturalists have given the name of the Ourang Outang. This creature differs from the rest of its fraternity, in being comparatively more docile and serviceable: and though possessing the power of imitation which is common to the whole race, yet making use of it less in mere mockery, than in the desire of improvement and instruction perfectly unknown to his brethren. The aptitude which it possesses of acquiring information, is surprisingly great, and probably, if placed in a favourable situation, it might admit of being domesticated in a considerable degree; but such advantages the ardour of scientific curiosity has never afforded this creature. The last we have heard of was seen, we believe, in the Island of Sumatra—it was of great size and strength, and upwards of seven feet high. It died defending desperately its innocent life against a party of Europeans, who, we cannot help thinking, might have better employed the superiority which their knowledge gave them over the poor native of the forest. It was probably this creature, seldom seen, but when once seen never forgotten, which occasioned

the ancient belief in the god Pan, with his sylvans and satyrs. Nay, but for the gift of speech, which we cannot suppose any of the family to have attained, we should have believed the satyr seen by St Anthony in the desert to have belonged to this tribe.

We can, therefore, the more easily credit the annals which attest that the collection of natural history belonging to Alexius Comnenus, preserved an animal of this kind, which had been domesticated and reclaimed to a surprising extent, and showed a degree of intelligence never perhaps to be attained in any other case. These explanations being premised, we return to the thread of our story.

The animal advanced with long noiseless steps; its shadow on the wall, when it held the torch so as to make it visible to the Frank, forming another fiend-resembling mimicry of its own large figure and extravagant-looking members. Count Robert remained in his lurking-hole, in no hurry to begin a strife, of which it was impossible to foretell the end. In the mean time, the man of the woods came nigh, and every step by which he approached, caused the Count's heart to vibrate almost audibly, at the idea of meeting danger of a nature so strange and new. At length the creature approached the bed—his hideous eyes were fixed on those of the Count; and, as much surprised at seeing him as Robert was at the meeting, he skipped about fifteen paces backwards at one spring, with a cry of instinctive terror, and then advanced on tiptoe, holding his torch as far forward as he could, between

him and the object of his fears, as if to examine him at the safest possible distance. Count Robert caught up a fragment of the bedstead, large enough to form a sort of club, with which he menaced the native of the wilds.

Apparently this poor creature's education, like education of most kinds, had not been acquired without blows, of which the recollection was as fresh as that of the lessons which they enforced. Sir Robert of Paris was a man at once to discover and to avail himself of the advantage obtained by finding that he possessed a degree of ascendency over his enemy, which he had not suspected. He erected his warlike figure, assumed a step as if triumphant in the lists, and advanced threatening his enemy with his club, as he would have menaced his antagonist with the redoubtable Tranchefer. The man of the woods, on the other hand, obviously gave way, and converted his cautious advance into a retreat no less cautious. Yet apparently the creature had not renounced some plan of resistance; he chattered in an angry and hostile tone, held out his torch in opposition, and seemed about to strike the crusader with it. Count Robert, however, determined to take his opponent at advantage, while his fears influenced him, and for this purpose resolved, if possible, to deprive him of his natural superiority in strength and agility, which his singular form showed he could not but possess over the human species. A master of his weapon, therefore, the Count menaced his savage antagonist with a stroke on the right side of his head, but suddenly averting

the blow, struck him with his whole force on the left temple, and in an instant was kneeling above him, when, drawing his dagger, he was about to deprive him of life.

The Ourang Outang, ignorant of the nature of this new weapon with which he was threatened, attempted at one and the same moment, to rise from the ground, overthrow his antagonist, and wrench the dagger from his grasp. In the first attempt, he would probably have succeeded; and as it was, he gained his knees, and seemed likely to prevail in the struggle, when he became sensible that the knight, drawing his poniard sharply through his grasp, had cut his paw severely, and seeing him aim the trenchant weapon at his throat, became probably aware that his enemy had his life at command. He suffered himself to be borne backwards without further resistance, with a deep wailing and melancholy cry, having in it something human, which excited compassion. He covered his eyes with the unwounded hand, as if he would have hid from his own sight the death which seemed approaching him.

Count Robert, notwithstanding his military frenzy, was, in ordinary matters, a calm-tempered and mild man, and particularly benevolent to the lower classes of creation. The thought rushed through his mind, "Why take from this unfortunate monster the breath which is in its nostrils, after which it cannot know another existence? And then, may it not be some prince or knight changed to this grotesque shape, that it may help to guard

these vaults, and the wonderful adventures that attach to them? Should I not, then, be guilty of a crime by slaying him, when he has rendered himself, rescue or no rescue, which he has done as completely as his transformed figure permits; and if he be actually a bestial creature, may he not have some touch of gratitude? I have heard the minstrels sing the lay of Androcles and the Lion. I will be on my guard with him."

So saying, he rose from above the man of the woods, and permitted him also to arise. The creature seemed sensible of the clemency, for he muttered, in a low and supplicating tone, which seemed at once to crave for mercy, and to return thanks for what he had already experienced. He wept too, as he saw the blood dropping from his wound, and with an anxious countenance, which had more of the human now that it was composed into an expression of pain and melancholy, seemed to await in terror the doom of a being more powerful than himself.

The pocket which the knight wore under his armour, capable of containing but few things, had, however, some vulnerary balsam, for which its owner had often occasion, a little lint, and a small roll of linen; these the knight took out, and motioned to the animal to hold forth his wounded hand. The man of the woods obeyed with hesitation and reluctance, and Count Robert applied the balsam and the dressings, acquainting his patient, at the same time, in a severe tone of voice, that perhaps he did wrong in putting to his use a balsam compounded for the service of the noblest knights; but

that, if he saw the least sign of his making an ungrateful use of the benefit he had conferred, he would bury the dagger, of which he had felt the efficacy, to the very handle in his body.

The Sylvan looked fixedly upon Count Robert, almost as if he understood the language used to him, and, making one of its native murmurs, it stooped to the earth, kissed the feet of the knight, and, embracing his knees, seemed to swear to him eternal gratitude and fidelity. Accordingly, when the Count retired to the bed and assumed his armour, to await the re-opening of the trap-door, the animal sat down by his side, directing its eyes in the line with his, and seemed quietly to wait till the door should open.

After waiting about an hour, a slight noise was heard in the upper chamber, and the wild man plucked the Frank by the cloak, as if to call his attention to what was about to happen. The same voice which had before spoken, was, after a whistle or two, heard to call, "Sylvan, Sylvan! where loiterest thou? Come instantly, or, by the rood, thou shalt abye thy sloth!"

The poor monster, as Trinculo might have called him, seemed perfectly aware of the meaning of this threat, and showed his sense of it by pressing close to the side of Count Robert, making at the same time a kind of whining, entreating, it would seem, the knight's protection. Forgetting the great improbability there was, even in his own opinion, that the creature could understand him, Count Robert said, "Why, my friend, thou hast already learned

the principal court prayer of this country, by which men entreat permission to speak and live. Fear nothing, poor creature—I am thy protector."

"Sylvan! what, ho!" said the voice again; "whom hast thou got for a companion?—some of the fiends, or ghosts of murdered men, who they say are frequent in these dungeons? or dost thou converse with the old blind rebel Grecian?—or, finally, is it true that men say of thee, that thou canst talk intelligibly when thou wilt, and only gibberest and chatterest for fear thou art sent to work? Come, thou lazy rascal! thou shalt have the advantage of the ladder to ascend by, though thou needst it no more than a daw to ascend the steeple of the Cathedral of St Sophia.* Come along then," he said, putting a ladder down the trap-door, "and put me not to the trouble of descending to fetch thee, else, by St Swithin, it shall be the worse for thee. Come along, therefore, like a good fellow, and for once I shall spare the whip."

The animal, apparently, was moved by this rhetoric, for, with a doleful look, which Count Robert saw by means of the nearly extinguished torch, he seemed to bid him farewell, and to creep away towards the ladder with the same excellent good-will wherewith a condemned criminal performs the like evolution. But no sooner did the Count look angry, and shake the formidable dagger, than the intelligent animal seemed at once to take his resolution, and clenching his hands firmly together in the fa-

* Now the chief mosque of the Ottoman capital.

shion of one who has made up his mind, he returned from the ladder's foot, and drew up behind Count Robert,—with the air, however, of a deserter, who feels himself but little at home when called into the field against his ancient commander.

In a short time the warder's patience was exhausted, and despairing of the sylvan's voluntary return, he resolved to descend in quest of him. Down the ladder he came, a bundle of keys in one hand, the other assisting his descent, and a sort of dark lantern, whose bottom was so fashioned that he could wear it upon his head like a hat. He had scarce stept on the floor, when he was surrounded by the nervous arms of the Count of Paris. At first the warder's idea was, that he was seized by the recusant Sylvan.

"How now, villain!" he said; "let me go, or thou shalt die the death."

"Thou diest thyself," said the Count, who, between the surprise and his own skill in wrestling, felt fully his advantage in the struggle.

"Treason! treason!" cried the warder, hearing by the voice that a stranger had mingled in the contest; "help, ho! above there! help, Hereward —Varangian!—Anglo-Saxon, or whatever accursed name thou callest thyself!"

While he spoke thus, the irresistible grasp of Count Robert seized his throat, and choked his utterance. They fell heavily, the jailer undermost, upon the floor of the dungeon, and Robert of Paris, the necessity of whose case excused the action,

plunged his dagger in the throat of the unfortunate. Just as he did so, a noise of armour was heard, and, rattling down the ladder, our acquaintance Hereward stood on the floor of the dungeon. The light, which had rolled from the head of the warder, continued to show him streaming with blood, and in the death-grasp of a stranger. Hereward hesitated not to fly to his assistance, and, seizing upon the Count of Paris at the same advantage which that knight had gained over his own adversary a moment before, held him forcibly down with his face to the earth.

Count Robert was one of the strongest men of that military age; but then so was the Varangian; and save that the latter had obtained a decided advantage by having his antagonist beneath him, it could not certainly have been conjectured which way the combat was to go.

"Yield! as your own jargon goes, rescue or no rescue," said the Varangian, "or die on the point of my dagger!"

"A French Count never yields," answered Robert, who began to conjecture with what sort of person he was engaged, "above all to a vagabond slave like thee!" With this he made an effort to rise, so sudden, so strong, so powerful, that he had almost freed himself from the Varangian's grasp, had not Hereward, by a violent exertion of his great strength, preserved the advantage he had gained, and raised his poniard to end the strife for ever; but a loud chuckling laugh of an unearthly sound was at this instant heard. The Varangian's

extended arm was seized with vigour, while a rough arm, embracing his throat, turned him over on his back, and gave the French Count an opportunity of springing up.

"Death to thee, wretch!" said the Varangian, scarce knowing whom he threatened; but the man of the woods apparently had an awful recollection of the prowess of human beings. He fled, therefore, swiftly up the ladder, and left Hereward and his deliverer to fight it out with what success chance might determine between them.

The circumstances seemed to argue a desperate combat; both were tall, strong, and courageous, both had defensive armour, and the fatal and desperate poniard was their only offensive weapon. They paused facing each other, and examined eagerly into their respective means of defence before hazarding a blow, which, if it missed, its attaint would certainly be fatally requited. During this deadly pause, a gleam shone from the trap-door above, as the wild and alarmed visage of the man of the woods was seen peering down by the light of a newly kindled torch which he held as low into the dungeon as he well could.

"Fight bravely, comrade," said Count Robert of Paris, "for we no longer battle in private; this respectable person having chosen to constitute himself judge of the field."

Hazardous as his situation was, the Varangian looked up, and was so struck with the wild and terrified expression which the creature had assumed, and the strife between curiosity and terror which

its grotesque features exhibited, that he could not help bursting into a fit of laughter.

"Sylvan is among those," said Hereward, "who would rather hold the candle to a dance so formidable than join in it himself."

"Is there then," said Count Robert, "any absolute necessity that thou and I perform this dance at all?"

"None but our own pleasure," answered Hereward, "for I suspect there is not between us any legitimate cause of quarrel demanding to be fought out in such a place, and before such a spectator. Thou art, if I mistake not, the bold Frank, who was yesternight imprisoned in this place with a tiger, chained within no distant spring of his bed?"

"I am," answered the Count.

"And where is the animal who was opposed to thee?"

"He lies yonder," answered the Count, "never again to be the object of more terror than the deer whom he may have preyed on in his day." He pointed to the body of the tiger, which Hereward examined by the light of the dark lantern already mentioned.

"And this, then, was thy handiwork?" said the wondering Anglo-Saxon.

"Sooth to say it was"—answered the Count, with indifference.

"And thou hast slain my comrade of this strange watch?" said the Varangian.

"Mortally wounded him at the least," said Count Robert.

"With your patience, I will be beholden to you for a moment's truce, while I examine his wound," said Hereward.

"Assuredly," answered the Count; "blighted be the arm which strikes a foul blow at an open antagonist!"

Without demanding further security, the Varangian quitted his posture of defence and precaution, and set himself, by the assistance of the dark lantern, to examine the wound of the first warder who appeared on the field, who seemed, by his Roman military dress, to be a soldier of the bands called Immortals. He found him in the death agony, but still able to speak.

"So, Varangian, thou art come at last,—and it is to thy sloth or treachery that I am to impute my fate?—Nay, answer me not!—The stranger struck me over the collar-bone—had we lived long together, or met often, I had done the like by thee, to wipe out the memory of certain transactions at the Golden Gate.—I know the use of the knife too well to doubt the effect of a blow aimed over the collar-bone by so strong a hand—I feel it coming. The Immortal, so called, becomes now, if priests say true, an immortal indeed, and Sebastes of Mytilene's bow is broken ere his quiver is half emptied."

The robber Greek sunk back in Hereward's arms, and closed his life with a groan, which was the last sound he uttered. The Varangian laid the body at length on the dungeon floor.

"This is a perplexed matter"—he said; "I am certainly not called upon to put to death a brave

man, although my national enemy, because he hath killed a miscreant who was privately meditating my own murder. Neither is this a place or a light by which to fight as becomes the champions of two nations. Let that quarrel be still for the present.—How say you then, noble sir, if we adjourn the present dispute till we effect your deliverance from the dungeons of the Blacquernal, and your restoration to your own friends and followers? If a poor Varangian should be of service to you in this matter, would you, when it was settled, refuse to meet him in fair fight, with your national weapons or his own?"

"If," said Count Robert, "whether friend or enemy, thou wilt extend thy assistance to my wife, who is also imprisoned somewhere in this inhospitable palace, be assured, that whatever be thy rank, whatever be thy country, whatever be thy condition, Robert of Paris will, at thy choice, proffer thee his right hand in friendship, or raise it against thee in fair and manly battle—a strife not of hatred, but of honour and esteem; and this I vow by the soul of Charlemagne, my ancestor, and by the shrine of my patroness, Our Lady of the Broken Lances."

"Enough said," replied Hereward. "I am as much bound to the assistance of your Lady Countess, being a poor exile, as if I were the first in the ranks of chivalry; for if any thing can make the cause of worth and bravery yet more obligatory, it must be its being united with that of a helpless and suffering female."

"I ought," said Count Robert, "to be here silent, without loading thy generosity with farther requests; yet thou art a man, whom, if fortune has not smiled at thy birth, by ordaining thee to be born within the ranks of noblesse and knighthood, yet Providence hath done thee more justice by giving thee a more gallant heart than is always possessed, I fear, by those who are inwoven in the gayest wreath of chivalry. There lingers here in these dungeons, for I cannot say he lives—a blind old man, to whom for three years every thing beyond his prison has been a universal blot. His food is bread and water, his intercourse limited to the conversation of a sullen warder, and if death can ever come as a deliverer, it must be to this dark old man. What sayst thou? Shall he, so unutterably miserable, not profit by perhaps the only opportunity of freedom that may ever occur to him?"

"By St Dunstan," answered the Varangian, "thou keepest over truly the oath thou hast taken as a redresser of wrongs! Thine own case is wellnigh desperate, and thou art willing to make it utterly so by uniting with it that of every unhappy person whom fate throws in thy way!"

"The more of human misery we attempt to relieve," said Robert of Paris, "the more we shall carry with us the blessing of our merciful saints, and Our Lady of the Broken Lances, who views with so much pain every species of human suffering or misfortune, save that which occurs within the enclosure of the lists. But come, valiant Anglo-Saxon, resolve me on my request as speedily

as thou canst. There is something in thy face of candour as well as sense, and it is with no small confidence that I desire to see us set forth in quest of my beloved Countess, who, when her deliverance is once achieved, will be a powerful aid to us in recovering that of others."

"So be it, then," said the Varangian; "we will proceed in quest of the Countess Brenhilda; and if, on recovering her, we find ourselves strong enough to procure the freedom of the dark old man, my cowardice, or want of compassion, shall never stop the attempt."

CHAPTER XVII.

'Tis strange that, in the dark sulphureous mine,
Where wild ambition piles its ripening stores
Of slumbering thunder, Love will interpose
His tiny torch, and cause the stern explosion
To burst, when the deviser's least aware.

Anonymous.

About noon of the same day, Agelastes met with Achilles Tatius, the commander of the Varangian guard, in those ruins of the Egyptian temple in which we formerly mentioned Hereward having had an interview with the philosopher. They met, as it seemed, in a very different humour. Tatius was gloomy, melancholy, and downcast; while the philosopher maintained the calm indifference which procured for him, and in some sort deserved, the title of the Elephant. "Thou blenchest, Achilles Tatius," said the philosopher, "now that thou hast frankly opposed thyself to all the dangers which stood between thee and greatness. Thou art like the idle boy who turned the mill-stream upon the machine, and that done, instead of making a proper use of it, was terrified at seeing it in motion."

"Thou dost me wrong, Agelastes," answered the Acolyte, "foul wrong; I am but like the mariner, who, although determined upon his voyage,

yet cannot forbear a sorrowing glance at the shore, before he parts with it, it may be for ever."

"It may have been right to think of this, but pardon me, valiant Tatius, when I tell you the account should have been made up before; and the grandson of Alguric the Hun ought to have computed chances and consequences ere he stretched his hand to his master's diadem."

"Hush! for Heaven's sake," said Tatius, looking round; "that, thou knowest, is a secret between our two selves; for if Nicephorus, the Cæsar, should learn it, where were we and our conspiracy?"

"Our bodies on the gibbet, probably," answered Agelastes, "and our souls divorced from them, and in the way of discovering the secrets which thou hast hitherto taken upon trust."

"Well," said Achilles, "and should not the consciousness of the possibility of this fate render us cautious?"

"Cautious *men* if you will," answered Agelastes, "but not timid children."

"Stone walls can hear"—said the Follower, lowering his voice. "Dionysius the tyrant, I have read, had an Ear which conveyed to him the secrets spoken within his state-prison at Syracuse."

"And that Ear is still stationary at Syracuse," said the philosopher. "Tell me, my most simple friend, art thou afraid it has been transported hither in one night, as the Latins believe of Our Lady's house of Loretto?"

"No," answered Achilles, "but in an affair so important too much caution cannot be used."

"Well, thou most cautious of candidates for empire, and most cold of military leaders, know that the Cæsar, deeming, I think, that there is no chance of the empire falling to any one but himself, hath taken in his head to consider his succession to Alexius as a matter of course, whenever the election takes place. In consequence, as matters of course are usually matters of indifference, he has left all thoughts of securing his interest upon this material occasion to thee and to me, while the foolish voluptuary hath himself run mad —for what think you? Something between man and woman—female in her lineaments, her limbs, and a part at least of her garments; but, so help me St George, most masculine in the rest of her attire, in her propensities, and in her exercises."

"The Amazonian wife, thou meanest," said Achilles, "of that iron-handed Frank, who dashed to pieces last night the golden lion of Solomon with a blow of his fist? By St George, the least which can come of such an amour is broken bones."

"That," said Agelastes, "is not quite so improbable as that Dionysius's Ear should fly hither from Syracuse in a single night; but he is presumptuous in respect of the influence which his supposed good looks have gained him among the Grecian dames."

"He was too presumptuous, I suppose," said Achilles Tatius, "to make a proper allowance for his situation as Cæsar, and the prospect of his being Emperor."

"Meantime," said Agelastes, "I have promised

him an interview with his Bradamante, who may perhaps reward his tender epithets of *Zoe kai psyche,** by divorcing his amorous soul from his unrivalled person."

"Meantime," said the Follower, "thou obtainest, I conclude, such orders and warrants as the Cæsar can give for the furtherance of our plot?"

"Assuredly," said Agelastes, "it is an opportunity not to be lost. This love fit, or mad fit, has blinded him; and without exciting too much attention to the progress of the plot, we can thus in safety conduct matters our own way, without causing malevolent remarks; and though I am conscious that, in doing so, I act somewhat at variance with my age and character, yet the end being to convert a worthy Follower into an Imperial Leader, I shame me not in procuring that interview with the lady, of which the Cæsar, as they term him, is so desirous.—What progress, meanwhile, hast thou made with the Varangians, who are, in respect of execution, the very arm of our design?"

"Scarce so good as I could wish," said Achilles Tatius; "yet I have made sure of some two or three score of those whom I found most accessible; nor have I any doubt, that, when the Cæsar is set aside, their cry will be for Achilles Tatius."

"And what of the gallant who assisted at our prelections?" said Agelastes; "your Edward, as Alexius termed him?"

* "Life and Soul."

"I have made no impression upon him," said the Follower; "and I am sorry for it, for he is one whom his comrades think well of, and would gladly follow. Meantime I have placed him as an additional sentinel upon the iron-witted Count of Paris, whom, both having an inveterate love of battle, he is very likely to put to death; and if it is afterwards challenged by the crusaders as a cause of war, it is only delivering up the Varangian, whose personal hatred will needs be represented as having occasioned the catastrophe. All this being prepared beforehand, how and when shall we deal with the Emperor?"

"For that," said Agelastes, "we must consult the Cæsar, who, although his expected happiness of to-day is not more certain than the state preferment that he expects to-morrow, and although his ideas are much more anxiously fixed upon his success with this said Countess than his succession to the empire, will, nevertheless, expect to be treated as the head of the enterprise for accelerating the latter. But, to speak my opinion, valiant Tatius, to-morrow will be the last day that Alexius shall hold the reins of empire."

"Let me know for certain," said the Follower, "as soon as thou canst, that I may warn our brethren, who are to have in readiness the insurgent citizens, and those of the Immortals who are combined with us, in the neighbourhood of the court, and in readiness to act—And, above all, that I may disperse upon distant guards such Varangians as I cannot trust."

"Rely upon me," said Agelastes, "for the most accurate information and instructions, so soon as I have seen Nicephorus Briennius. One word permit me to ask—In what manner is the wife of the Cæsar to be disposed of?"

"Somewhere," said the Follower, "where I can never be compelled to hear more of her history. Were it not for that nightly pest of her lectures, I could be good-natured enough to take care of her destiny myself, and teach her the difference betwixt a real emperor and this Briennius, who thinks so much of himself." So saying, they separated; the Follower elated in look and manner considerably above what he had been when they met.

Agelastes looked after his companion with a scornful laugh. "There," he said, "goes a fool, whose lack of sense prevents his eyes from being dazzled by the torch which cannot fail to consume him. A half-bred, half-acting, half-thinking, half-daring caitiff, whose poorest thoughts—and those which deserve that name must be poor indeed—are not the produce of his own understanding. He expects to circumvent the fiery, haughty, and proud Nicephorus Briennius! If he does so, it will not be by his own policy, and still less by his valour. Nor shall Anna Commena, the soul of wit and genius, be chained to such an unimaginative log as yonder half barbarian. No—she shall have a husband of pure Grecian extraction, and well stored with that learning which was studied when Rome was great, and Greece illustrious. Nor will it be

the least charm of the Imperial throne, that it is partaken by a partner whose personal studies have taught her to esteem and value those of the Emperor." He took a step or two with conscious elevation, and then, as conscience-checked, he added, in a suppressed voice, "But then, if Anna were destined for Empress, it follows of course that Alexius must die—no consent could be trusted to. —And what then?—the death of an ordinary man is indifferent, when it plants on the throne a philosopher and a historian; and at what time were the possessors of the empire curious to enquire when or by whose agency their predecessors died? —Diogenes! Ho, Diogenes!" The slave did not immediately come, so that Agelastes, wrapt in the anticipation of his greatness, had time to add a few more words—"Tush—I must reckon with Heaven, say the priests, for many things, so I will throw this also into the account. The death of the Emperor may be twenty ways achieved without my having the blame of it. The blood which we have shed may spot our hand, if closely regarded, but it shall scarce stain our forehead." Diogenes here entered—"Has the Frank lady been removed?" said the philosopher.

The slave signified his assent.

"How did she bear her removal?"

"As authorized by your lordship, indifferently well. She had resented her separation from her husband, and her being detained in the palace, and committed some violence upon the slaves of the Household, several of whom were said to be slain,

although we perhaps ought only to read sorely frightened. She recognised me at once, and when I told her that I came to offer her a day's retirement in your own lodgings, until it should be in your power to achieve the liberation of her husband, she at once consented, and I deposited her in the secret Cytherean garden-house."

"Admirably done, my faithful Diogenes," said the philosopher; "thou art like the genii who attended on the eastern talismans; I have but to intimate my will to thee, and it is accomplished."

Diogenes bowed deeply, and withdrew.

"Yet remember, slave!" said Agelastes, speaking to himself; "there is danger in knowing too much—and should my character ever become questioned, too many of my secrets are in the power of Diogenes."

At this moment a blow thrice repeated, and struck upon one of the images without, which had been so framed as to return a tingling sound, and in so far deserved the praise of being vocal, interrupted his soliloquy.

"There knocks," said he, "one of our allies; who can it be that comes so late?" He touched the figure of Isis with his staff, and the Cæsar Nicephorus Briennius entered in the full Grecian habit, and that graceful dress anxiously arranged to the best advantage. "Let me hope, my lord," said Agelastes, receiving the Cæsar with an apparently grave and reserved face, "your Highness comes to tell me that your sentiments are changed on reflection, and that whatever you had to confer

about with this Frankish lady, may be at least deferred until the principal part of our conspiracy has been successfully executed."

"Philosopher," answered the Cæsar, "no. My resolution, once taken, is not the sport of circumstances. Believe me, that I have not finished so many labours without being ready to undertake others. The favour of Venus is the reward of the labours of Mars, nor would I think it worth while to worship the god armipotent with the toil and risk attending his service, unless I had previously attained some decided proofs that I was wreathed with the myrtle, intimating the favour of his beautiful mistress."

"I beg pardon for my boldness," said Agelastes; "but has your Imperial Highness reflected, that you were wagering, with the wildest rashness, an empire, including thine own life, mine, and all who are joined with us in a hardy scheme? And against what were they waged? Against the very precarious favour of a woman, who is altogether divided betwixt fiend and female, and in either capacity is most likely to be fatal to our present scheme, either by her good will, or by the offence which she may take. If she prove such as you wish, she will desire to keep her lover by her side, and to spare him the danger of engaging in a perilous conspiracy; and if she remains, as the world believe her, constant to her husband, and to the sentiments she vowed to him at the altar, you may guess what cause of offence you are likely to give,

by urging a suit which she has already received so very ill."

"Pshaw, old man! Thou turnest a dotard, and in the great knowledge thou possessest of other things, hast forgotten the knowledge best worth knowing—that of the beautiful part of the creation. Think of the impression likely to be made by a gallant neither ignoble in situation, nor unacceptable in presence, upon a lady who must fear the consequences of refusal! Come, Agelastes, let me have no more of thy croaking, auguring bad fortune like the raven from the blasted oak on the left hand; but declaim, as well thou canst, how faint heart never won fair lady, and how those best deserve empire who can wreathe the myrtles of Venus with the laurels of Mars. Come, man, undo me the secret entrance which combines these magical ruins with groves that are fashioned rather like those of Cytheros or Naxos."

"It must be as you will!" said the philosopher, with a deep and somewhat affected sigh.

"Here, Diogenes!" called aloud the Cæsar; "when thou art summoned, mischief is not far distant. Come, undo the secret entrance. Mischief, my trusty negro, is not so distant but she will answer the first clatter of the stones."

The negro looked at his master, who returned him a glance acquiescing in the Cæsar's proposal. Diogenes then went to a part of the ruined wall which was covered by some climbing shrubs, all of which he carefully removed. This showed a little postern door, closed irregularly, and filled up, from

the threshold to the top, with large square stones, all of which the slave took out and piled aside, as if for the purpose of replacing them. "I leave thee," said Agelastes to the negro, "to guard this door, and let no one enter, except he has the sign, upon the peril of thy life. It were dangerous it should be left open at this period of the day."

The obsequious Diogenes put his hand to his sabre and to his head, as if to signify the usual promise of fidelity or death, by which those of his condition generally expressed their answer to their master's commands. Diogenes then lighted a small lantern, and pulling out a key, opened an inner door of wood, and prepared to step forward.

"Hold, friend Diogenes," said the Cæsar; "thou wantest not thy lantern to discern an honest man, whom, if thou didst seek, I must needs say thou hast come to the wrong place to find one. Nail thou up these creeping shrubs before the entrance of the place, and abide thou there, as already directed, till our return, to parry the curiosity of any who may be attracted by the sight of the private passage."

The black slave drew back as he gave the lamp to the Cæsar, and Agelastes followed the light through a long, but narrow, arched passage, well supplied with air from space to space, and not neglected in the inside to the degree which its exterior would have implied.

"I will not enter with you into the gardens," said Agelastes, "or to the bower of Cytherea, where I am too old to be a worshipper. Thou thy-

self, I think, Imperial Cæsar, art well aware of the road, having travelled it divers times; and, if I mistake not, for the fairest reasons."

"The more thanks," said the Cæsar, "are due to mine excellent friend Agelastes, who forgets his own age to accommodate the youth of his friends."

CHAPTER XVIII.

We must now return to the dungeon of the Blacquernal, where circumstances had formed at least a temporary union between the stout Varangian and Count Robert of Paris, who had a stronger resemblance to each other in their dispositions than probably either of them would have been willing to admit. The virtues of the Varangian were all of that natural and unrefined kind which nature herself dictates to a gallant man, to whom a total want of fear, and the most prompt alacrity to meet danger, had been attributes of a life-long standing. The Count, on the other hand, had all that bravery, generosity, and love of adventure, which was possessed by the rude soldier, with the virtues, partly real, partly fantastic, which those of his rank and country acquired from the spirit of chivalry. The one might be compared to the diamond as it came from the mine, before it had yet received the advantages of cutting and setting; the other was the ornamented gem, which, cut into facets and richly set, had lost perhaps a little of its original substance, yet still, at the same time, to the eye of an inspector, had something more showy and splendid than when it was, according

to the phrase of lapidaries, *en brut*. In the one case, the value was more artificial; in the other, it was the more natural and real of the two. Chance, therefore, had made a temporary alliance between two men, the foundation of whose characters bore such strong resemblance to each other, that they were only separated by a course of education, which had left rigid prejudices on both sides, and which prejudices were not unlikely to run counter to each other. The Varangian commenced his conversation with the Count in a tone of familiarity, approaching nearer to rudeness than the speaker was aware of, and much of which, though most innocently intended by Hereward, might be taken amiss by his new brother in arms. The most offensive part of his deportment, however, was a blunt, bold disregard to the title of those whom he addressed, adhering thereby to the manners of the Saxons, from whom he drew his descent, and which was likely to be at least unpleasing to the Franks as well as Normans, who had already received and become very tenacious of the privileges of the feudal system, the mummery of heraldry, and the warlike claims assumed by knights, as belonging only to their own order.

Hereward was apt, it must be owned, to think too little of these distinctions; while he had at least a sufficient tendency to think enough of the power and wealth of the Greek empire which he served,—of the dignity inherent in Alexius Comnenus, and which he was also disposed to grant to the Grecian officers, who, under the Emperor, commanded his

own corps, and particularly to Achilles Tatius. This man Hereward knew to be a coward, and half-suspected to be a villain. Still, however, the Follower was always the direct channel through which the Imperial graces were conferred on the Varangians in general, as well as upon Hereward himself; and he had always the policy to represent such favours as being more or less indirectly the consequence of his own intercession. He was supposed vigorously to espouse the quarrel of the Varangians, in all the disputes between them and the other corps; he was liberal and open-handed; gave every soldier his due; and, bating the trifling circumstance of valour, which was not particularly his forte, it would have been difficult for these strangers to have demanded a leader more to their wishes. Besides this, our friend Hereward was admitted by him into his society, attended him, as we have seen, upon secret expeditions, and shared, therefore, deeply in what may be termed by an expressive, though vulgar phrase, the sneaking kindness entertained for this new Achilles by the greater part of his myrmidons.

Their attachment might be explained, perhaps, as a liking to their commander, as strong as could well exist with a marvellous lack of honour and esteem. The scheme, therefore, formed by Hereward to effect the deliverance of the Count of Paris, comprehended as much faith to the Emperor, and his representative, the Acolyte or Follower, as was consistent with rendering justice to the injured Frank.

In furtherance of this plan, he conducted Count Robert from the subterranean vaults of the Blacquernal, of the intricacies of which he was master, having been repeatedly, of late, stationed sentinel there, for the purpose of acquiring that knowledge of which Tatius promised himself the advantage in the ensuing conspiracy. When they were in the open air, and at some distance from the gloomy towers of the Palace, he bluntly asked the Count of Paris whether he knew Agelastes the Philosopher. The other answered in the negative.

"Look you now, Sir Knight, you hurt yourself in attempting to impose upon me," said Hereward. "You must know him; for I saw you dined with him yesterday."

"O! with that learned old man?" said the Count. "I know nothing of him worth owning or disguising to thee or any one. A wily person he is, half herald and half minstrel."

"Half procurer and whole knave," subjoined the Varangian. "With the mask of apparent good-humour he conceals his pandering to the vices of others; with the specious jargon of philosophy, he has argued himself out of religious belief and moral principle; and, with the appearance of the most devoted loyalty, he will, if he is not checked in time, either argue his too confiding master out of life and empire, or, if he fails in this, reason his simple associates into death and misery."

"And do you know all this," said Count Robert, "and permit this man to go unimpeached?"

"O, content you, sir," replied the Varangian;

"I cannot yet form any plot which Agelastes may not countermine; but the time will come, nay it is already approaching, when the Emperor's attention shall be irresistibly turned to the conduct of this man, and then let the philosopher sit fast, or by St Dunstan the barbarian overthrows him! I would only fain, methinks, save from his clutches a foolish friend, who has listened to his delusions."

"But what have I to do," said the Count, "with this man, or with his plots?"

"Much," said Hereward, "although you know it not. The main supporter of this plot is no other than the Cæsar, who ought to be the most faithful of men; but ever since Alexius has named a Sebastocrator, an officer that is higher in rank, and nearer to the throne than the Cæsar himself, so long has Nicephorus Briennius been displeased and dissatisfied, though for what length of time he has joined the schemes of the astucious Agelastes, it is more difficult to say. This I know, that for many months he has fed liberally, as his riches enable him to do, the vices and prodigality of the Cæsar. He has encouraged him to show disrespect to his wife, although the Emperor's daughter; has put ill-will between him and the royal family. And if Briennius bears no longer the fame of a rational man, and the renown of a good leader, he is deprived of both by following the advice of this artful sycophant."

"And what is all this to me?" said the Frank. "Agelastes may be a true man, or a time-serving slave; his master, Alexius Comnenus, is not so

much allied to me or mine, that I should meddle in the intrigues of his court?"

"You may be mistaken in that," said the blunt Varangian; "if these intrigues involve the happiness and virtue"——

"Death of a thousand martyrs!" said the Frank, "doth paltry intrigues and quarrels of slaves involve a single thought of suspicion of the noble Countess of Paris? The oaths of thy whole generation were ineffectual to prove but that one of her hairs had changed its colour to silver!"

"Well imagined, gallant knight," said the Anglo-Saxon; "thou art a husband fitted for the atmosphere of Constantinople, which calls for little vigilance and a strong belief. Thou wilt find many followers and fellows in this court of ours."

"Hark thee, friend," replied the Frank, "let us have no more words, nor walk farther together than just to the most solitary nook of this bewildered city, and let us there set to that work which we left even now unfinished."

"If thou wert a Duke, Sir Count," replied the Varangian, "thou couldst not invite to a combat one who is more ready for it. Yet consider the odds on which we fight. If I fall, my moan is soon made; but will my death set thy wife at liberty if she is under restraint, or restore her honour if it is tarnished?—Will it do any thing more than remove from the world the only person who is willing to give thee aid, at his own risk and danger, and who hopes to unite thee to thy wife, and replace thee at the head of thy forces?"

"I was wrong," said the Count of Paris; "I was entirely wrong; but beware, my good friend, how thou couplest the name of Brenhilda of Aspramonte with the word of dishonour, and tell me, instead of this irritating discourse, whither go we now?"

"To the Cytherean gardens of Agelastes, from which we are not far distant," said the Anglo-Saxon; "yet he hath a nearer way to it than that by which we now travel, else I should be at a loss to account for the short space in which he could exchange the charms of his garden for the gloomy ruins of the Temple of Isis, and the Imperial palace of the Blacquernal."

"And wherefore, and how long," said Count Robert, "dost thou conclude that my Countess is detained in these gardens?"

"Ever since yesterday," replied Hereward. "When both I, and several of my companions, at my request, kept close watch upon the Cæsar and your lady, we did plainly perceive passages of fiery admiration on his part, and anger, as it seemed, on hers, which Agelastes, being Nicephorus's friend, was likely, as usual, to bring to an end, by a separation of you both from the army of the crusaders, that your wife, like many a matron before, might have the pleasure of taking up her residence in the gardens of that worthy sage; while you, my lord, might take up your own permanently in the castle of Blacquernal."

"Villain! why didst thou not apprise me of this yesterday?"

"A likely thing," said Hereward, "that I should feel myself at liberty to leave the ranks, and make such a communication to a man, whom, far from a friend, I then considered in the light of a personal enemy! Methinks, that instead of such language as this, you should be thankful that so many chance circumstances have at length brought me to befriend and assist you."

Count Robert felt the truth of what was said, though at the same time his fiery temper longed to avenge itself, according to its wont, upon the party which was nearest at hand.

But now they arrived at what the citizens of Constantinople called the Philosopher's Gardens. Here Hereward hoped to obtain entrance, for he had gained a knowledge of some part, at least, of the private signals of Achilles and Agelastes, since he had been introduced to the last at the ruins of the Temple of Isis. They had not indeed admitted him to their entire secret; yet, confident in his connexion with the Follower, they had no hesitation in communicating to him snatches of knowledge, such as, committed to a man of shrewd natural sense like the Anglo-Saxon, could scarce fail, in time and by degrees, to make him master of the whole. Count Robert and his companion stood before an arched door, the only opening in a high wall, and the Anglo-Saxon was about to knock, when, as if the idea had suddenly struck him,—

"What if the wretch Diogenes opens the gate? We must kill him, ere he can fly back and betray us. Well, it is a matter of necessity, and the vil-

lain has deserved his death by a hundred horrid crimes."

"Kill him then, thyself," retorted Count Robert; "he is nearer thy degree, and assuredly I will not defile the name of Charlemagne with the blood of a black slave."

"Nay, God-a-mercy!" answered the Anglo-Saxon, "but you must bestir yourself in the action, supposing there come rescue, and that I be overborne by odds."

"Such odds," said the knight, "will render the action more like a *mêlée*, or general battle; and assure youself, I will not be slack when I may, with my honour, be active."

"I doubt it not," said the Varangian; "but the distinction seems a strange one, that, before permitting a man to defend himself, or annoy his enemy, requires him to demand the pedigree of his ancestor."

"Fear you not, sir," said Count Robert. "The strict rule of chivalry indeed bears what I tell thee, but when the question is, Fight or not? there is great allowance to be made for a decision in the affirmative."

"Let me give then the exorciser's rap," replied Hereward, "and see what fiend will appear."

So saying, he knocked in a particular manner, and the door opened inwards; a dwarfish negress stood in the gap—her white hair contrasted singularly with her dark complexion, and with the broad laughing look peculiar to these slaves. She had something in her physiognomy which, severely con-

strued, might argue malice, and a delight in human misery.

"Is Agelastes"—— said the Varangian; but he had not completed the sentence, when she answered him, by pointing down a shadowed walk.

The Anglo-Saxon and Frank turned in that direction, when the hag rather muttered, than said distinctly, "You are one of the initiated, Varangian; take heed whom you take with you, when you may hardly, peradventure, be welcomed even going alone."

Hereward made a sign that he understood her, and they were instantly out of her sight. The path winded beautifully through the shades of an Eastern garden, where clumps of flowers and labyrinths of flowering shrubs, and the tall boughs of the forest trees, rendered even the breath of noon cool and acceptable.

"Here we must use our utmost caution," said Hereward, speaking in a low tone of voice; "for here it is most likely the deer that we seek has found its refuge. Better allow me to pass before, since you are too deeply agitated to possess the coolness necessary for a scout. Keep concealed beneath yon oak, and let no vain scruples of honour deter you from creeping beneath the underwood, or beneath the earth itself, if you should hear a footfall. If the lovers have agreed, Agelastes, it is probable, walks his round, to prevent intrusion."

"Death and furies! it cannot be!" exclaimed the fiery Frank.—"Lady of the Broken Lances, take

thy votary's life, ere thou torment him with this agony!"

He saw, however, the necessity of keeping a strong force upon himself, and permitted, without further remonstrance, the Varangian to pursue his way, looking, however, earnestly after him. By advancing forward a little, he could observe Hereward draw near to a pavilion which arose at no great distance from the place where they had parted. Here he observed him apply, first his eye, and then his ear, to one of the casements, which were in a great measure grown over, and excluded from the light, by various flowering shrubs. He almost thought he saw a grave interest take place in the countenance of the Varangian, and he longed to have his share of the information which he had doubtless obtained.

He crept, therefore, with noiseless steps, through the same labyrinth of foliage which had covered the approaches of Hereward; and so silent were his movements, that he touched the Anglo-Saxon, in order to make him aware of his presence, before he observed his approach.

Hereward, not aware at first by whom he was approached, turned on the intruder with a countenance like a burning coal. Seeing, however, that it was the Frank, he shrugged his shoulders, as if pitying the impatience which could not be kept under prudent restraint, and drawing himself back, allowed the Count the privilege of a peeping place through plinths of the casement, which could not be decerned by the sharpest eye from

the inner side. The sombre character of the light which penetrated into this abode of pleasure, was suited to that species of thought to which a Temple of Cytherea was supposed to be dedicated. Portraits and groups of statuary were also to be seen, in the taste of those which they had beheld at the Kiosk of the waterfall, yet something more free in the ideas which they conveyed than were to be found at their first resting-place. Shortly after, the door of the pavilion opened, and the Countess entered, followed by her attendant Agatha. The lady threw herself on a couch as she came in, while her attendant, who was a young and very handsome woman, kept herself modestly in the background, so much so as hardly to be distinguished.

"What dost thou think," said the Countess, "of so suspicious a friend as Agelastes? so gallant an enemy as the Cæsar, as he is called?"

"What should I think," returned the damsel, "except that what the old man calls friendship is hatred, and what the Cæsar terms a patriotic love for his country, which will not permit him to set its enemies at liberty, is in fact too strong an affection for his fair captive?"

"For such an affection," said the Countess, "he shall have the same requital as if it were indeed the hostility of which he would give it the colour.—My true and noble lord! hadst thou an idea of the calamities to which they have subjected me, how soon wouldst thou break through every restraint to hasten to my relief!"

"Art thou a man," said Count Robert to his companion; "and canst thou advise me to remain still and hear this."

"I am one man," said the Anglo-Saxon; "you, sir, are another; but all our arithmetic will not make us more than two; and in this place, it is probable that a whistle from the Cæsar, or a scream from Agelastes, would bring a thousand to match us, if we were as bold as Bevis of Hampton.—Stand still and keep quiet. I counsel this, less as respecting my own life, which, by embarking upon a wild-goose chase with so strange a partner, I have shown I put at little value, than for thy safety, and that of the lady thy Countess, who shows herself as virtuous as beautiful."

"I was imposed on at first," said the Lady Brenhilda to her attendant. "Affectation of severe morals, of deep learning, and of rigid rectitude, assumed by this wicked old man, made me believe in part the character which he pretended; but the gloss is rubbed off since he let me see into his alliance with the unworthy Cæsar, and the ugly picture remains in its native loathsomeness. Nevertheless, if I can, by address or subtlety, deceive this arch-deceiver,—as he has taken from me, in a great measure, every other kind of assistance,—I will not refuse that of craft, which he may find perhaps equal to his own?"

"Hear you that?" said the Varangian to the Count of Paris. "Do not let your impatience mar the web of your lady's prudence. I will

weigh a woman's wit against a man's valour where there is aught to do! Let us not come in with our assistance until time shall show us that it is necessary for her safety and our success."

"Amen," said the Count of Paris; "but hope not, Sir Saxon, that thy prudence shall persuade me to leave this garden without taking full vengeance on that unworthy Cæsar, and the pretended philosopher, if indeed he turns out to have assumed a character"——The Count was here beginning to raise his voice, when the Saxon, without ceremony, placed his hand on his mouth. "Thou takest a liberty," said Count Robert, lowering however his tones.

"Ay, truly," said Hereward; "when the house is on fire, I do not stop to ask whether the water which I pour on it be perfumed or no."

This recalled the Frank to a sense of his situation; and if not contented with the Saxon's mode of making an apology, he was at least silenced. A distant noise was now heard—the Countess listened, and changed colour. "Agatha," she said, "we are like champions in the lists, and here comes the adversary. Let us retreat into this side apartment, and so for a while put off an encounter thus alarming." So saying, the two females withdrew into a sort of anteroom, which opened from the principal apartment behind the seat which Brenhilda had occupied.

They had scarcely disappeared, when, as the stage direction has it, enter from the other side the Cæsar and Agelastes. They had perhaps heard

the last words of Brenhilda, for the Cæsar repeated in a low tone—

" Militat omnis amans, habet et sua castra Cupido.

" What, has our fair opponent withdrawn her forces? No matter, it shows she thinks of the warfare, though the enemy be not in sight. Well, thou shalt not have to upbraid me this time, Agelastes, with precipitating my amours, and depriving myself of the pleasure of pursuit. By Heavens, I will be as regular in my progress as if in reality I bore on my shoulders the whole load of years which make the difference between us; for I shrewdly suspect that with thee, old man, it is that envious churl Time that hath plucked the wings of Cupid."

" Say not so, mighty Cæsar," said the old man; " it is the hand of Prudence, which, depriving Cupid's wing of some wild feathers, leaves him still enough to fly with an equal and steady flight."

" Thy flight, however, was less measured, Agelastes, when thou didst collect that armoury—that magazine of Cupid's panoply, out of which thy kindness permitted me but now to arm myself, or rather to repair my accoutrements."

So saying, he glanced his eye over his own person, blazing with gems, and adorned with a chain of gold, bracelets, rings, and other ornaments, which, with a new and splendid habit, assumed since his arrival at these Cytherean gardens, tended to set off his very handsome figure.

" I am glad," said Agelastes, " if you have found among toys, which I now never wear, and seldom

made use of even when life was young with me, any thing which may set off your natural advantages. Remember only this slight condition, that such of these trifles as have made part of your wearing apparel on this distinguished day, cannot return to a meaner owner, but must of necessity remain the property of that greatness of which they had once formed the ornament."

"I cannot consent to this, my worthy friend," said the Cæsar; "I know thou valuest these jewels only in so far as a philosopher may value them; that is, for nothing save the remembrances which attach to them. This large seal-ring, for instance, was—I have heard you say—the property of Socrates; if so, you cannot view it save with devout thankfulness, that your own philosophy has never been tried with the exercise of a Xantippe. These clasps released, in older times, the lovely bosom of Phryne; and they now belong to one who could do better homage to the beauties they concealed or discovered than could the cynic Diogenes. These buckles, too"——

"I will spare thy ingenuity, good youth," said Agelastes, somewhat nettled; "or rather, noble Cæsar. Keep thy wit—thou wilt have ample occasion for it."

"Fear not me," said the Cæsar. "Let us proceed, since you will, to exercise the gifts which we possess, such as they are, either natural or bequeathed to us by our dear and respected friend. Hah!" he said, the door opening suddenly, and the

Countess almost meeting him, "our wishes are here anticipated."

He bowed accordingly with the deepest deference to the Lady Brenhilda, who, having made some alterations to enhance the splendour of her attire, now moved forward from the withdrawing-room into which she had retreated.

"Hail, noble lady," said the Cæsar, "whom I have visited with the intention of apologizing for detaining you, in some degree against your will, in those strange regions in which you unexpectedly find yourself."

"Not in some degree," answered the lady, "but entirely contrary to my inclinations, which are, to be with my husband the Count of Paris, and the followers who have taken the cross under his banner."

"Such, doubtless, were your thoughts when you left the land of the west," said Agelastes; "but, fair Countess, have they experienced no change? You have left a shore streaming with human blood when the slightest provocation occurred, and thou hast come to one whose principal maxim is to increase the sum of human happiness by every mode which can be invented. In the west yonder, he or she is respected most who can best exercise their tyrannical strength in making others miserable, while in these more placid realms, we reserve our garlands for the ingenious youth, or lovely lady, who can best make happy the person whose affection is fixed upon her."

"But, reverend philosopher," said the Countess,

"who labourest so artificially in recommending the yoke of pleasure, know that you contradict every notion which I have been taught from my infancy. In the land where my nurture lay, so far are we from acknowledging your doctrines, that we match not, except like the lion and the lioness, when the male has compelled the female to acknowledge his superior worth and valour. Such is our rule, that a damsel, even of mean degree, would think herself heinously undermatched, if wedded to a gallant whose fame in arms was yet unknown."

"But, noble lady," said the Cæsar, "a dying man may then find room for some faint hope. Were there but a chance that distinction in arms could gain those affections which have been stolen, rather than fairly conferred, how many are there who would willingly enter into the competition where the prize is so fair! What is the enterprise too bold to be undertaken on such a condition! And where is the individual whose heart would not feel, that in baring his sword for the prize, he made vow never to return it to the scabbard without the proud boast, What I have not yet won, I have deserved!"

"You see, lady," said Agelastes, who, apprehending that the last speech of the Cæsar had made some impression, hastened to follow it up with a suitable observation—"You see that the fire of chivalry burns as gallantly in the bosom of the Grecians as in that of the western nations."

"Yes," answered Brenhilda, "and I have heard of the celebrated siege of Troy, on which occasion

a dastardly coward carried off the wife of a brave man, shunned every proffer of encounter with the husband whom he had wronged, and finally caused the death of his numerous brothers, the destruction of his native city, with all the wealth which it contained, and died himself the death of a pitiful poltroon, lamented only by his worthless leman, to show how well the rules of chivalry were understood by your predecessors."

"Lady, you mistake," said the Cæsar; "the offences of Paris were those of a dissolute Asiatic; the courage which avenged them was that of the Greek Empire."

"You are learned, sir," said the lady; "but think not that I will trust your words until you produce before me a Grecian knight, gallant enough to look upon the armed crest of my husband without quaking."

"That, methinks, were not extremely difficult," returned the Cæsar; "if they have not flattered me, I have myself been thought equal in battle to more dangerous men than him who has been strangely mated with the Lady Brenhilda."

"That is soon tried," answered the Countess. "You will hardly, I think, deny, that my husband, separated from me by some unworthy trick, is still at thy command, and could be produced at thy pleasure. I will ask no armour for him save what he wears, no weapon but his good sword Tranchefer; then place him in this chamber, or any other lists equally narrow, and if he flinch, or cry craven, or remain dead under shield, let Bren-

hilda be the prize of the conqueror.—Merciful Heaven!" she concluded, as she sunk back upon her seat, "forgive me for the crime of even imagining such a termination, which is equal almost to doubting thine unerring judgment!"

"Let me, however," said the Cæsar, "catch up these precious words before they fall to the ground.—Let me hope that he, to whom the heavens shall give power and strength to conquer this highly-esteemed Count of Paris, shall succeed him in the affections of Brenhilda; and believe me, the sun plunges not through the sky to his resting-place, with the same celerity that I shall hasten to the encounter."

"Now, by Heaven!" said Count Robert, in an anxious whisper to Hereward, "it is too much to expect me to stand by and hear a contemptible Greek, who durst not stand even the rattling farewell which Tranchefer takes of his scabbard, brave me in my absence, and affect to make love to my lady *par amours!* And she, too—methinks Brenhilda allows more license than she is wont to do to yonder chattering popinjay. By the rood! I will spring into the apartment, front them with my personal appearance, and confute yonder braggart in a manner he is like to remember."

"Under favour," said the Varangian, who was the only auditor of this violent speech, "you shall be ruled by calm reason while I am with you. When we are separated, let the devil of knight errantry, which has such possession of thee, take thee upon

his shoulders, and carry thee full tilt wheresoever he lists."

"Thou art a brute," said the Count, looking at him with a contempt corresponding to the expression he made use of; "not only without humanity, but without the sense of natural honour or natural shame. The most despicable of animals stands not by tamely and sees another assail his mate. The bull offers his horns to a rival—the mastiff uses his jaws—and even the timid stag becomes furious, and gores."

"Because they are beasts," said the Varangian, "and their mistresses also creatures without shame or reason, who are not aware of the sanctity of a choice. But thou, too, Count, canst thou not see the obvious purpose of this poor lady, forsaken by all the world, to keep her faith towards thee, by eluding the snares with which wicked men have beset her? By the souls of my fathers! my heart is so much moved by her ingenuity, mingled as I see it is with the most perfect candour and faith, that I myself, in fault of a better champion, would willingly raise the axe in her behalf!"

"I thank thee, my good friend," said the Count; "I thank thee as heartily as if it were possible thou shouldst be left to do that good office for Brenhilda, the beloved of many a noble lord, the mistress of many a powerful vassal; and, what is more, much more than thanks, I crave thy pardon for the wrong I did thee but now."

"My pardon you cannot need," said the Varan-

gian; "for I take no offence that is not seriously meant.—Stay, they speak again."

"It is strange it should be so," said the Cæsar, as he paced the apartment; "but methinks, nay, I am almost certain, Agelastes, that I hear voices in the vicinity of this apartment of thy privacy."

"It is impossible," said Agelastes; "but I will go and see."

Perceiving him to leave the pavilion, the Varangian made the Frank sensible that they must crouch down among a little thicket of evergreens, where they lay completely obscured. The philosopher made his rounds with a heavy step, but a watchful eye; and the two listeners were obliged to observe the strictest silence, without motion of any kind, until he had completed an ineffectual search, and returned into the pavilion.

"By my faith, brave man," said the Count, "ere we return to our skulking-place, I must tell thee in thine ear, that never, in my life, was temptation so strong upon me, as that which prompted me to beat out that old hypocrite's brains, provided I could have reconciled it with my honour; and heartily do I wish that thou, whose honour no way withheld thee, had experienced and given way to some impulse of a similar nature."

"Such fancies have passed through my head," said the Varangian; "but I will not follow them till they are consistent both with our own safety, and more particularly with that of the Countess."

"I thank thee again for thy good-will to her," said Count Robert; "and, by Heaven! if fight we

must at length, as it seems likely, I will neither grudge thee an honourable antagonist, nor fair quarter if the combat goes against thee."

"Thou hast my thanks," was the reply of Hereward; "only, for Heaven's sake, be silent in this conjuncture, and do what thou wilt afterwards."

Before the Varangian and the Count had again resumed their posture of listeners, the parties within the pavilion, conceiving themselves unwatched, had resumed their conversation, speaking low, yet with considerable animation:

"It is in vain you would persuade me," said the Countess, "that you know not where my husband is, or that you have not the most absolute influence over his captivity. Who else could have an interest in banishing or putting to death the husband, but he that affects to admire the wife?"

"You do me wrong, beautiful lady," answered the Cæsar, "and forget that I can in no shape be termed the moving-spring of this empire; that my father-in-law, Alexius, is the Emperor; and that the woman who terms herself my wife, is jealous as a fiend can be of my slightest motion.—What possibility was there that I should work the captivity of your husband and your own? The open affront which the Count of Paris put upon the Emperor, was one which he was likely to avenge, either by secret guile or by open force. Me it no way touched, save as the humble vassal of thy charms; and it was by the wisdom and the art of the sage Agelastes, that I was able to extricate thee from the gulf in which thou hadst else cer-

tainly perished. Nay, weep not, lady, for as yet we know not the fate of Count Robert; but, credit me, it is wisdom to choose a better protector, and consider him as no more."

"A better than him," said Brenhilda, "I can never have, were I to choose out of the knighthood of all the world!"

"This hand," said the Cæsar, drawing himself into a martial attitude, "should decide that question, were the man of whom thou thinkest so much yet moving on the face of this earth, and at liberty.'

"Thou art," said Brenhilda, looking fixedly at him with the fire of indignation flashing from every feature—"thou art—but it avails not telling thee what is thy real name: believe me, the world shall one day ring with it, and be justly sensible of its value. Observe what I am about to say—Robert of Paris is gone—or captive, I know not where. He cannot fight the match of which thou seemest so desirous—but here stands Brenhilda, born heiress of Aspramonte, by marriage the wedded wife of the good Count of Paris. She was never matched in the lists by mortal man, except the valiant Count, and since thou art so grieved that thou canst not meet her husband in battle, thou canst not surely object, if she is willing, to meet thee in his steed?"

"How, madam?" said the Cæsar, astonished; "do you propose yourself to hold the lists against me?"

"Against you!" said the Countess; "against all

the Grecian empire, if they shall affirm that Robert of Paris is justly used and lawfully confined."

"And are the conditions," said the Cæsar, "the same as if Count Robert himself held the lists? The vanquished must then be at the pleasure of the conqueror for good or evil."

"It would seem so," said the Countess, "nor do I refuse the hazard; only, that if the other champion shall bite the dust, the noble Count Robert shall be set at liberty, and permitted to depart with all suitable honours."

"This I refuse not," said the Cæsar, "provided it is in my power."

A deep growling sound, like that of a modern gong, here interrupted the conference.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE Varangian and Count Robert, at every risk of discovery, had remained so near as fully to conjecture, though they could not expressly overhear, the purport of the conversation.

"He has accepted her challenge?" said the Count of Paris.

"And with apparent willingness," said Hereward.

"O, doubtless, doubtless"— answered the Crusader; "but he knows not the skill in war which a woman may attain; for my part, God knows I have enough depending upon the issue of this contest, yet such is my confidence, that I would to God I had more. I vow to our Lady of the Broken Lances, that I desire every furrow of land I possess—every honour which I can call my own, from the Countship of Paris, down to the leather that binds my spur, were dependent and at issue upon this fair field, between your Cæsar, as men term him, and Brenhilda of Aspramonte."

"It is a noble confidence," said the Varangian, "nor durst I say it is a rash one; only I cannot but remember that the Cæsar is a strong man as well as a handsome, expert in the use of arms, and, above all, less strictly bound than you esteem your-

self by the rules of honour. There are many ways in which advantage may be given and taken, which will not, in the Cæsar's estimation, alter the character of the field from an equal one, although it might do so in the opinion of the chivalrous Count of Paris, or even in that of the poor Varangian. But first let me conduct you to some place of safety, for your escape must be soon, if it is not already detected. The sounds which we heard intimate that some of his confederate plotters have visited the garden on other than love affairs. I will guide thee to another avenue than that by which we entered. But you would hardly, I suppose, be pleased to adopt the wisest alternative?"

"And what may that be?" said the Count.

"To give thy purse, though it were thine all, to some poor ferryman to waft thee over the Hellespont, then hasten to carry thy complaint to Godfrey of Bouillon, and what friends thou mayst have among thy brethren crusaders, and determine, as thou easily canst, on a sufficient number of them to come back and menace the city with instant war, unless the Emperor should deliver up thy lady, most unfairly made prisoner, and prevent, by his authority, this absurd and unnatural combat."

"And would you have me then," said Count Robert, "move the crusaders to break a fairly appointed field of battle? Do you think that Godfrey of Bouillon would turn back upon his pilgrimage for such an unworthy purpose; or that the Countess of Paris would accept as a service, means of safety which would stain her honour for ever,

by breaking an appointment solemnly made on her own challenge?—Never!"

"My judgment is then at fault," said the Varangian, "for I see I can hammer out no expedient which is not, in some extravagant manner or another, controlled by your foolish notions. Here is a man who has been trapped into the power of his enemy, that he might not interfere to prevent a base stratagem upon his lady, involving both her life and honour; yet he thinks it a matter of necessity that he keeps faith as precisely with these midnight poisoners, as he would had it been pledged to the most honourable men!"

"Thou say'st a painful truth," said Count Robert; "but my word is the emblem of my faith; and if I pass it to a dishonourable or faithless foe, it is imprudently done on my part; but if I break it, being once pledged, it is a dishonourable action, and the disgrace can never be washed from my shield."

"Do you mean, then," said the Varangian, "to suffer your wife's honour to remain pledged as it at present is, on the event of an unequal combat?"

"God and the saints pardon thee such a thought!" said the Count of Paris. "I will go to see this combat with a heart as firm, if not as light, as any time I ever saw spears splintered. If by the influence of any accident or treachery, (for fairly, and with such an antagonist, Brenhilda of Aspramonte cannot be overthrown,) I step into the lists, proclaim the Cæsar as he is—a villain—show the falsehood of his conduct from beginning to end,

—appeal to every noble heart that hears me, and then—God show the right!"

Hereward paused, and shook his head. "All this," he said, "might be feasible enough, provided the combat were to be fought in the presence of your own countrymen, or even, by the mass! if the Varangians were to be guards of the lists. But treachery of every kind is so familiar to the Greeks, that I question if they would view the conduct of their Cæsar as any thing else than a pardonable and natural stratagem of Dan Cupid, to be smiled at, rather than subjected to disgrace or punishment."

"A nation," said Count Robert, "who could smile at such a jest, may Heaven refuse them sympathy at their utmost need, when their sword is broken in their hand, and their wives and daughters shrieking in the relentless grasp of a barbarous enemy!"

Hereward looked upon his companion, whose flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes bore witness to his enthusiasm.

"I see," he said, "you are resolved, and I know that your resolution can in justice be called by no other name than an act of heroic folly—What then? it is long since life has been bitter to the Varangian exile. Morn has raised him from a joyless bed, which night has seen him lie down upon, wearied with wielding a mercenary weapon in the wars of strangers. He has longed to lay down his life in an honourable cause, and this is one in which the extremity and very essence of honour is implicated. It tallies also with my scheme of saving

the Emperor, which will be greatly facilitated by the downfall of his ungrateful son-in-law." Then addressing himself to the Count, he continued, "Well, Sir Count, as thou art the person principally concerned, I am willing to yield to thy reasoning in this affair; but I hope you will permit me to mingle with your resolution some advices of a more everyday and less fantastic nature. For example, thy escape from the dungeons of the Blacquernal must soon be generally known. In prudence, indeed, I myself must be the first to communicate it, since otherwise the suspicion will fall on me—Where do you think of concealing yourself? for assuredly the search will be close and general."

"For that," said the Count of Paris, "I must be indebted to thy suggestion, with thanks for every lie which thou findest thyself obliged to make, to contrive, and produce in my behalf, entreating thee only to render them as few as possible, they being a coin which I myself never fabricate."

"Sir Knight," answered Hereward, "let me begin first by saying, that no knight that ever belted sword is more a slave to truth, when truth is observed towards him, than the poor soldier who talks to thee; but when the game depends not upon fair play, but upon lulling men's cautiousness asleep by falsehood, and drugging their senses by opiate draughts, they who would scruple at no means of deceiving me, can hardly expect that I, who am paid in such base money, should pass nothing on my part but what is lawful and genuine. For the

present thou must remain concealed within my poor apartment, in the barracks of the Varangians, which is the last place where they will think of seeking for thee. Take this, my upper cloak, and follow me; and now that we are about to leave these gardens, thou mayst follow me unsuspected as a sentinel attending his officer; for, take it along with you, noble Count, that we Varangians are a sort of persons upon whom the Greeks care not to look very long or fixedly."

They now reached the gate where they had been admitted by the negress, and Hereward, who was intrusted with the power, it seems, of letting himself out of the philosopher's premises, though not of entering without assistance from the portress, took out a key which turned the lock on the garden side, so that they soon found themselves at liberty. They then proceeded by by-paths through the city, Hereward leading the way, and the Count following, without speech or remonstrance, until they stood before the portal of the barracks of the Varangians.

"Make haste," said the sentinel who was on duty, "dinner is already begun." The communication sounded joyfully in the ears of Hereward, who was much afraid that his companion might have been stopt and examined. By a side passage he reached his own quarters, and introduced the Count into a small room, the sleeping chamber of his squire, where he apologized for leaving him for some time; and, going out, locked the door, for fear, as he said, of intrusion.

The demon of suspicion was not very likely to

molest a mind so frankly constituted as that of Count Robert, and yet the last action of Hereward did not fail to occasion some painful reflections.

"This man," he said, "had needs be true, for I have reposed in him a mighty trust, which few hirelings in his situation would honourably discharge. What is to prevent him to report to the principal officer of his watch, that the Frank prisoner, Robert Count of Paris, whose wife stands engaged for so desperate a combat with the Cæsar, has escaped, indeed, this morning, from the prisons of the Blacquernal, but has suffered himself to be trepanned at noon, and is again a captive in the barracks of the Varangian Guard?—what means of defence are mine, were I discovered to these mercenaries?—What man could do, by the favour of our Lady of the Broken Lances, I have not failed to achieve. I have slain a tiger in single combat—I have killed one warder, and conquered the desperate and gigantic creature by whom he was supported. I have had terms enough at command to bring over this Varangian to my side, in appearance at least; yet all this does not encourage me to hope that I could long keep at bay ten or a dozen such men as these beef-fed knaves appear to be, led in upon me by a fellow of thews and sinews such as those of my late companion.—Yet, for shame, Robert! such thoughts are unworthy a descendant of Charlemagne. When wert thou wont so curiously to count thine enemies, and when wert thou wont to be suspicious, since he, whose bosom may truly boast itself incapable of fraud, ought in

honesty to be the last to expect it in another? The Varangian's look is open, his coolness in danger is striking, his speech is more frank and ready than ever was that of a traitor. If he is false, there is no faith in the hand of nature, for truth, sincerity, and courage are written upon his forehead."

While Count Robert was thus reflecting upon his condition, and combating the thick-coming doubts and suspicions which its uncertainties gave rise to, he began to be sensible that he had not eaten for many hours; and amidst many doubts and fears of a more heroic nature, he half entertained a lurking suspicion, that they meant to let hunger undermine his strength before they adventured into the apartment to deal with him.

We shall best see how far these doubts were deserved by Hereward, or how far they were unjust, by following his course after he left his barrack-room. Snatching a morsel of dinner, which he eat with an affectation of great hunger, but, in fact, that his attention to his food might be a pretence for dispensing with disagreeable questions, or with conversation of any kind, he pleaded duty, and immediately leaving his comrades, directed his course to the lodgings of Achilles Tatius, which were a part of the same building. A Syrian slave, who opened the door, after a deep reverence to Hereward, whom he knew as a favourite attendant of the Acolyte, said to him that his master was gone forth, but had desired him to say, that if he wished to see him, he would find him at the Philo-

sopher's Gardens, so called, as belonging to the sage Agelastes.

Hereward turned about instantly, and availing himself of his knowledge of Constantinople to thread its streets in the shortest time possible, at length stood alone before the door in the garden-wall, at which he and the Count of Paris had previously been admitted in the earlier part of the day. The same negress appeared at the same private signal, and when he asked for Achilles Tatius, she replied, with some sharpness, "Since you were here this morning, I marvel you did not meet him, or that, having business with him, you did not stay till he arrived. Sure I am, that not long after you entered the garden the Acolyte was enquiring for you."

"It skills not, old woman," said the Varangian; "I communicate the reason of my motions to my commander, but not to thee." He entered the garden accordingly, and, avoiding the twilight-path that led to the Bower of Love,—so was the pavilion named in which he had overheard the dialogue between the Cæsar and the Countess of Paris,—he arrived before a simple garden-house, whose humble and modest front seemed to announce that it was the abode of philosophy and learning. Here, passing before the windows, he made some little noise, expecting to attract the attention either of Achilles Tatius, or his accomplice Agelastes, as chance should determine. It was the first who heard, and who replied. The door opened; a lofty plume

stooped itself, that its owner might cross the threshold, and the stately form of Achilles Tatius entered the gardens. "What now," he said, "our trusty sentinel? what hast thou, at this time of day, come to report to us? Thou art our good friend, and highly-esteemed soldier, and well we wot thine errand must be of importance, since thou hast brought it thyself, and at an hour so unusual."

"Pray Heaven," said Hereward, "that the news I have brought deserve a welcome."

"Speak them instantly," said the Acolyte, "good or bad; thou speakest to a man to whom fear is unknown." But his eye, which quailed as he looked on the soldier—his colour, which went and came—his hands, which busied themselves in an uncertain manner in adjusting the belt of his sword,—all argued a state of mind very different from that which his tone of defiance would fain have implied. "Courage," he said, "my trusty soldier! speak the news to me. I can bear the worst thou hast to tell."

"In a word, then," said the Varangian, "your Valour directed me this morning to play the office of master of the rounds upon those dungeons of the Blacquernal palace, where last night the boisterous Count Robert of Paris was incarcerated"——

"I remember well," said Achilles Tatius,—"What then?"

"As I reposed me," said Hereward, "in an apartment above the vaults, I heard cries from beneath, of a kind which attracted my attention. I

hastened to examine, and my surprise was extreme, when, looking down into the dungeon, though I could see nothing distinctly, yet, by the wailing and whimpering sounds, I conceived that the Man of the Forest, the animal called Sylvan, whom our soldiers have so far indoctrinated in our Saxon tongue as to make him useful in the wards of the prison, was bemoaning himself on account of some violent injury. Descending with a torch, I found the bed on which the prisoner had been let down burnt to cinders; the tiger which had been chained within a spring of it, with its skull broken to pieces; the creature called Sylvan, prostrate, and writhing under great pain and terror, and no prisoner whatever in the dungeon. There were marks that all the fastenings had been withdrawn by a Mytilenian soldier, companion of my watch, when he visited the dungeon at the usual hour; and as, in my anxious search, I at length found his dead body, slain apparently by a stab in the throat, I was obliged to believe that while I was examining the cell, he, this Count Robert, with whose daring life the adventure is well consistent, had escaped to the upper air, by means, doubtless, of the ladder and trap-door by which I had descended."

"And wherefore didst thou not instantly call treason, and raise the hue and cry?" demanded the Acolyte.

"I dared not venture to do so," replied the Varangian, "till I had instructions from your Valour.

The alarming cry of treason, and the various rumours likely at this moment to ensue, might have involved a search so close, as perchance would have discovered matters in which the Acolyte himself would have been rendered subject to suspicion."

"Thou art right," said Achilles Tatius, in a whisper; "and yet it will be necessary that we do not pretend any longer to conceal the flight of this important prisoner, if we would not pass for being his accomplices. Where thinkest thou this unhappy fugitive can have taken refuge?"

"That I was in hopes of learning from your Valour's greater wisdom," said Hereward.

"Thinkest thou not," said Achilles, "that he may have crossed the Hellespont, in order to rejoin his own countrymen and adherents?"

"It is much to be dreaded," said Hereward. "Undoubtedly, if the Count listened to the advice of any one who knew the face of the country, such would be the very counsel he would receive."

"The danger, then, of his return at the head of a vengeful body of Franks," said the Acolyte, "is not so immediate as I apprehended at first, for the Emperor gave positive orders that the boats and galleys which yesterday transported the crusaders to the shores of Asia should recross the strait, and bring back no single one of them from the step upon their journey on which he had so far furthered them.—Besides, they all,—their leaders, that is to say,—made their vows before crossing, that they would not turn back so much as a foot's pace, now

that they had set actually forth on the road to Palestine."

"So therefore," said Hereward, "one of two propositions is unquestionable; either Count Robert is on the eastern side of the strait, having no means of returning with his brethren to avenge the usage he has received, and may therefore be securely set at defiance,—or else he lurks somewhere in Constantinople, without a friend or ally to take his part, or encourage him openly to state his supposed wrongs;—in either case, there can, I think, be no tact in conveying to the palace the news that he has freed himself, since it would only alarm the Court, and afford the Emperor ground for many suspicions.—But it is not for an ignorant barbarian like me to prescribe a course of conduct to your valour and wisdom, and methinks the sage Agelastes were a fitter counsellor than such as I am."

"No, no, no," said the Acolyte, in a hurried whisper; "the philosopher and I are right good friends, sworn good friends, very especially bound together; but should it come to this, that one of us must needs throw before the footstool of the Emperor the head of the other, I think thou wouldst not advise that I, whose hairs have not a trace of silver, should be the last in making the offering; wherefore, we will say nothing of this mishap, but give thee full power and the highest charge to seek for Count Robert of Paris, be he dead or alive, to secure him within the dungeons set apart for

the discipline of our own corps, and when thou hast done so, to bring me notice. I may make him my friend in many ways, by extricating his wife from danger by the axes of my Varangians. What is there in this metropolis that they have to oppose them?"

"When raised in a just cause," answered Hereward, "nothing."

"Hah!—say'st thou?" said the Acolyte; "how meanest thou by that?—but I know—Thou art scrupulous about having the just and lawful command of thy officer in every action in which thou art engaged, and, thinking in that dutiful and soldierlike manner, it is my duty as thine Acolyte to see thy scruples satisfied. A warrant shalt thou have, with full powers, to seek for and imprison this foreign Count of whom we have been speaking—And, hark thee, my excellent friend," he continued, with some hesitation, "I think thou hadst better begone, and begin, or rather continue thy search. It is unnecessary to inform our friend Agelastes of what has happened, until his advice be more needful than as yet it is on the occasion. Home—home to the barracks; I will account to him for thy appearance here, if he be curious on the subject, which, as a suspicious old man, he is likely to be. Go to the barracks, and act as if thou hadst a warrant in every respect full and ample. I will provide thee with one when I come back to my quarters."

The Varangian turned hastily homewards.

"Now, is it not," he said, "a strange thing, and

enough to make a man a rogue for life—to observe how the devil encourages young beginners in falsehood! I have told a greater lie—at least I have suppressed more truth—than on any occasion before in my whole life—and what is the consequence? Why, my commander throws almost at my head a warrant sufficient to guarantee and protect me in all I have done, or propose to do! If the foul fiend were thus regular in protecting his votaries, methinks they would have little reason to complain of him, or better men to be astonished at their number. But a time comes, they say, when he seldom fails to desert them. Therefore, get thee behind me, Satan! If I have seemed to be thy servant for a short time, it is but with an honest and Christian purpose."

As he entertained these thoughts, he looked back upon the path, and was startled at an apparition of a creature of a much greater size, and a stranger shape than human, covered, all but the face, with a reddish-dun fur; his expression an ugly, and yet a sad melancholy; a cloth was wrapt round one hand, and an air of pain and languor, bespoke suffering from a wound. So much was Hereward pre-occupied with his own reflections, that at first he thought his imagination had actually raised the devil; but after a sudden start of surprise, he recognised his acquaintance Sylvan. "Hah! old friend," he said, "I am happy thou hast made thy escape to a place where thou wilt find plenty of fruit to support thee. Take my advice—keep out of the way of discovery—Keep thy friend's counsel."

The Man of the Wood uttered a chattering noise in return to this address.

"I understand thee," said Hereward, "thou wilt tell no tales, thou sayest; and faith I will trust thee rather than the better part of my own two-legged race, who are eternally circumventing or murdering each other."

A minute after the creature was out of sight, Hereward heard the shriek of a female, and a voice which cried for help. The accents must have been uncommonly interesting to the Varangian, since, forgetting his own dangerous situation, he immediately turned and flew to the suppliant's assistance.

END OF VOLUME FORTY-SIXTH.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE AND COMPANY,
PAUL'S WORK, CANONGATE.